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**SUCCESSFUL HEADSHIP LEADERSHIP IN PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS IN CYPRUS**

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**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2010**

## **ABSTRACT**

This research explored the nature and conduct of successful leadership in the context of Cyprus; how policy and school contexts and heads' experience influence headship leadership. The empirical findings of this study draw upon ethnographic methods rooted within the naturalistic paradigm in order to illuminate the complex and dynamic nature of headship leadership in a specific country context. A group of ten successful heads in urban primary schools of Cyprus was selected. Data was collected through observations, a review of a number of schools' documents and semi-structured interviews carried out with each of the successful heads and with people that had everyday conduct with them.

The overall findings provided empirical evidence of the complexity of successful head teachers day-to-day practices and pointed to the positive and negative in themes of 'policy contexts', 'the values of society' and 'school and experience contexts'. These results support earlier evidence on successful leadership but also extend this. The evidence from this research has important implications for head teachers' learning and development and the role of the government in raising standards of schooling in Cyprus.

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Professor Christopher Day for his insightful tuition, assistance and patience. I am deeply indebted to my supervisor for his support and guidance throughout this research process.

I am grateful to head teachers, teachers, parents and students who participated in my research and provided rich insights of their roles in schools. Without their involvement this study would not possible to become a reality.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my parents Angelos and Androula, my brother Panayiotis and my friends for their constant support and encouragement, especially during the most difficult moments.



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>E.U</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>ISSPP</b>	<b>International Successful School Principals' Project</b>
<b>MOEC</b>	<b>Ministry of Education and Culture</b>
<b>NCSL</b>	<b>National college of school leadership</b>
<b>SES</b>	<b>Socioeconomic status</b>
<b>TV</b>	<b>Television</b>
<b>U.K.</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>U.S.A.</b>	<b>United States of America</b>
<b>Vs</b>	<b>Versus</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### SETTING THE PROBLEM

The focus of the research that is presented here is on successful primary heads in the Cyprus Education System in a period in which the work of heads has become complex and unpredictable (Day et al., 2000; Morrison, 2002). It provides a way to gain deeper insights into the day-to-day practices of successful leaders in the Cyprus context and a better understanding of their qualities, skills, strategies and values. The findings will provide evidence of the complex, unpredictable and multi-dimensional character of leadership.

Research shows that heads leadership has a vital role in school improvement and school change (Mortimore, 1993; Hopkins et al., 1994; West et al., 2000). A review of research claims that all successful leaders draw on the same 'core leadership practices' wherever they work (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2008:29). However, it is reported that there is variation of success among heads <sup>fluctuation</sup> <sup>amongst leaders owing to</sup> due to their years of experience in a school, their years of experience in the position and the specific school context (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001a; Harris, 2002; Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy and Swann, 2003; Sugrue, 2005; Day and Leithwood, 2007). Much of the research argues for the central position in successful leadership practices in the creation of learning cultures and high expectations from teachers and students (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001a; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Day, Leithwood and Sammons, 2008a). It demonstrates the distributing of leadership, and the development of a healthy climate in schools (Spillane, Camburn

and Pareja, 2007; Harris, 2008; Leithwood and Harris, 2008). Additionally, successful leaders are primarily people-centred, by communicating with people clearly and building relationships based on trust, respect and integrity (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001b), as well as achievement focused. They are committed to their profession as well as to the people they serve (Day and Leithwood, 2007) and possess the skills and qualities to manage the tensions that are at the core of working with people in a school (Day et al., 2000; Walker and Dimmock 2000; Day, 2005; Duigan, 2006). Much of the research literature on leadership also identifies the moral aspect of leaders who communicate their values and vision to teachers, students and parents (Day et al., 2001b; Møller, Eggen, Fuglestad, Langfeldt, Presthus, Skrøvset, Stjernstrøm and Vedøy, 2005). Other research also points to a 'democratic' notion of successful leaders, though the discrepancies in definitions of democratic leadership as are shaped by the contexts in which they are embedded (Mahony and Moos, 1998; Riley, 2003; Johansson, 2004; Hatcher, 2005; Møller et al., 2005). Finally, it suggests that successful leaders have the abilities to show caring and develop emotional understanding for the people around them (Hargreaves, 2003b; Day, 2004; Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki and Giles, 2005).

Most of the research about successful leadership has been carried out in Western countries (e.g. Australia, U.K., U.S.A.). However, the transference of research evidence from one national culture to the other is not always appropriate because there is a variation in traditions, cultures, conditions and practices (MacBeath, 1998; Dimmock and Walker, 2000a; Leithwood and Kantarama, 2000).

In this thesis, therefore, whilst taking into account the international leadership research literature, I set out to explore successful headship leadership in the Cypriot context, posing the following questions:

- 1. What makes a head teacher successful in Cyprus? [How is ‘success’ defined in the Cyprus Education System?]**
- 2. Are there any similarities or differences between successful head teachers in Cyprus and those of successful heads in other countries?**
- 3. How do school contexts influence the practices of successful heads (socio-economic context, school size, head teacher experience, school location) [What are the skills, qualities and knowledge that differentiate them?]**
- 4. How does the rotation policy affect the way that successful heads lead in Cyprus?**

The study takes account of the existing knowledge and research on headship leadership and presents a holistic, empirically based picture of how the term of ‘successful headship leadership’ is defined in action in the Cyprus Educational System. It uses a multi-perspective approach to examine heads’ day-to-day practices from the perspectives of head teachers themselves by exploring their biographies and their practices in these changing times; and includes data from deputy heads, teachers, students and parents of the head teachers’ leadership in school (Day et al., 2000). Although it is located within the context of Cyprus some findings may also be applicable to other settings with similar contextual characteristics.

Chapter one provides a description of the changing social, economic and cultural context and how these changes affect the conditions for leadership.

Chapter two discusses how the social contexts of schools affect leadership practices. First, it presents the existing educational system in Cyprus and the external pressures that are an influence for change (e.g. UNESCO, 1997; Kazamias, 2004). It then discusses how the national context of schools affects successful head teachers' practice.

Chapter three discusses concepts of leadership and management. It explores the leaders' strategies to achieve school goals and their vital qualities in order to be successful.

Chapter four provides the methodological framework of the research. It discusses the paradigm that this study adopts and describes the methods, the research tools and the procedures undertaken for data collection and analysis. It also presents the research methods and defines the criteria for successful headship. Finally, it discusses the ethical issues underpinning the study.

The next two chapters (five and six) discuss the findings from the data cross case analysis. In particular, chapter five investigates the moral and emotional dimension of successful head teachers and how they support and develop the people in their schools. Chapter six identifies how the heads' different experiences and social contexts affect their practices.

Chapter seven discusses the individual skills, qualities and practices of the successful heads interviewed and observed for the study. It provides biographical pictures of each head and a short description of their school context. Finally, the cases are clustered into four groups based on their similarities and differences for better understanding and conceptualization.

Chapter eight highlights the main findings of the study and discusses its implications for head teachers' education and policy recommendations. It explores the original contribution of the research to knowledge and understanding of successful headship leadership in times of change within the context of Cyprus and presents recommendations for further research. It concludes by discussing the research limitations.

In a number of ways this study is a step on my personal journey of trying to understand and deepen my knowledge of primary school leadership, which began ten years ago as a graduate student of a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership. It is a journey that opened my eyes to explore different opportunities for learning about leadership from heads, deputies, other teachers, parents and students. The journey has been enriched by my teaching experience and my own day-to-day experience with heads. As a teacher in primary schools, over the last 15 years, I have experienced nine different head teachers who demonstrated a variety of skills, qualities, values and practices. The variations in their practices fuelled my motivation to study them and to better understand the way they developed their practices.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF SUCCESSFUL HEADSHIP**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Chapter one discusses how the nature of leadership has changed in the last decades and how new demands put pressure on head teachers to change their traditional practices, to help their schools adapt more easily to environmental demands. The chapter goes on to explore successful headship leadership, as it is characterized by existing international research. The examination of the literature provided support for the design of the methodology for this study.

#### **1.2 The Changing Context of Leadership**

Over the last 20 years, the educational systems in Western countries<sup>1</sup> (e.g. Australia, U.K., U.S.A.) have been the subject of massive structural reforms, as a result of social, economic, cultural and political changes (Carter and O' Neill, 1995; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). As a consequence, the responsibilities and the roles of school teachers and head teachers have changed, as they have responded to the changing conditions in which they work, adapted under new pressures and demands from the external environment and reacted to the need to raise standards. Educational policies have also been changed through the years and place greater pressure on head teachers. A number of Western countries (Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, U.K.) introduced reforms in order to improve the quality of their education. However, according to Ball

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Western countries' in this thesis is referred to the group of English speaking countries (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, U.K., U.S.A.) and the Scandinavian countries in which research on school leadership is exist (e.g. Denmark, Norway, Sweden).

(2003) they are facing, three key interrelated elements of the reform 'package' which make the pressures on head teachers even greater: (a) the ideologies of the market in education –they assume that education is to be regarded as a commodity that schools and teachers are the 'providers' of this commodity and that parents are 'customers' (Hughes, 1994:184) (b) the new public management – which is the insertion of the theories and techniques of business management into public sector and (c) performativity – a form of direct steering which replaces intervention and prescription with target setting accountability and comparison (Ball, 1998). These elements push the educational system of those countries to experience a policy shift by transferring responsibility to individual schools, putting emphasis on financial and contractual accountability, developing of indicators of performance and stressing on parents and public as consumers and the changing expectations of school leadership. In schools the head teachers are in the middle of these reforms and changes, having new pressures as they are the main 'carrier' of transformation (Ball, 1998:123).

On the basis of these changes the educational literature, mainly developed in Western countries (e.g. Australia, U.K., U.S.A.), has identified that headship has become a more and more demanding activity (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Heck, 1996; Gunter, 2001; Louis, 2003; Fink and Brayman, 2004). Uncertainty, unpredictability, complexity and variety are some of the core features of leadership in changing times.

Over the last three decades, schools and therefore, head teachers, have been confronted with new challenges, such as increasingly complex roles responsibilities and accountabilities. These include school based-management, school inspections which broadened their role beyond the traditional boundaries (Beck and Murphy,



1996; Dimmock and Walker, 2000b; Gewirtz and Ball, 2000; Gunter, 2001); changes occurring in social partners e.g. parents' expectations, single parents families, child abuse, drugs ( Day, 1999); the impact of new technologies (Barber, 1996; Beck, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003b); the growing opportunities for learning outside school and increasing accountability, bureaucracy and public scrutiny (MacBeath, 1998).

Discussing the changing role of schools and leaders in a four country research project, MacBeath, Moos and Riley (1998) suggest that:

the challenge to schools, and to school leaders in particular, goes far deeper than the recasting of what is taught in classrooms and what is valued within the curriculum. It is concerned with a shift from teaching to learning, from a labour-intensive to a capital-intensive organization and with much wider definition of who the leaders are (MacBeath et al., 1998:25).

Sugrue (2005b) provides a vivid metaphor to describe the demanding and changing role of leadership and at the same time he underlines its complex, uncertain and unpredictable character:

... principals have been engaged in an ongoing 'fire-fighting', trench warfare or occupying the swampy lowlands where dangers and hazards continually lurk in the shadows of everyday life in schools (Sugrue 2005b:4).

New educational policies have placed expectations on heads to reform school environments by increasing the students' achievements and teachers performance (Fullan, 1992; Ball, 1997; Gewirtz, 2002). According to leadership research, the key player in securing school reform and in helping teachers and students raise their performance is the head (Hopkins et al., 1994; Sammons, Mortimore, and Hillman, 1995; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Robinson, 2007). His/her leadership capacities and abilities help teachers to improve their teaching level and consequently, to increase

students' achieved outcomes (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2002; Robinson, 2007; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood and Kington, 2008).

### **1.3 Successful Headship**

The definition of successful headship in the Cypriot context has been emerged from the perceptions of MOEC's inspectors. Based on their interviews (see Chapter 4) a successful head was the person who was able to manage and lead his/her school. On the one hand, they expected successful heads to implement MOEC's policy, to control and monitor teachers, to strictly follow the rules and regulations and to delegate responsibilities to their staff. On the other hand, they anticipated successful heads to have vision and be committed to their job; to focus on students learning and to support teachers' development; to develop good relationships with their students, teachers and parents and at the same time to set limits in parents' interventions for school matters.

Successful primary school leadership in action, in the Cypriot context, will be defined by investigating the skills, qualities, values and knowledge of successful heads. In order to be able to design the methodology for the study and answer the question, it was necessary first to examine literature on successful leadership. Multi-perspective research about successful leadership has been developed over the last decade starting with the research of Day and his colleagues (2000) in England. Since then a number of researchers from different countries have studied successful headship leadership in a variety of national and school contexts. The following discussion will explore the values, skills, qualities, practices and strategies of successful heads.

Successful leadership research emphasizes the links between leadership approaches and the cultural, social and personal context in which people work (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001b; Møller, Eggen, Fuglestad, Langfeldt, Presthus, Skrøvset, Stjernstrøm and Vedøy, 2005; Sugrue, 2005a; Day and Leithwood, 2007).

Recently, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2007:29), in a review of leadership research, identified the 'core practices' of successful school leadership and they claim that 'almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic practices' wherever they work. These four categories are described briefly below:

- Building vision and setting directions: includes building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and demonstrate high performance expectations. People are motivated by goals which help them find meaning in their work and find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context.
- Understanding and developing people: includes providing individualized support and consideration, fostering intellectual stimulation and the modelling of values and practices important to the mission of the school. These specific practices according to more recent research has demonstrated, 'are central to the ways in which successful leaders integrate the functional and the personal'.
- Redesigning the organization: includes building a collaborative culture, creating and maintaining shared decision making and, restructuring the organization, building relationships with parents and the wider community. This set of practices acknowledges the importance of collective learning and the building of professional

learning communities as key contributors to teachers work and students learning.

- Managing the teaching and learning programme: focus on staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activity and buffering staff against distractions (Leithwood et al., 2007:30).

These findings underline the complex and multidimensional role of head teachers and emphasize the influence of leadership at different levels (e.g. on staff, students and school community) (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Sugrue, 2005a). While they may be generalized across contexts, there is other research that underlines the contingent character of leadership and the special attention that should be placed on the context in which leadership exists by the researchers (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan and Lee, 1982; Dimmock and Walker, 2000a; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Day, Leithwood and Sammons, 2008a).

In summarizing the findings of 63 cases in seven countries Day and his colleagues (2007) argued that learning lies at the heart of school leadership. This involves the engagement in learning procedures of all participants: students, teachers and head teachers themselves (Barth, 1990; Lambert, 1998; Southworth, 2000). Successful heads care how the students are learning. Robinson (2007:21) in a meta-analysis of 11 studies, suggested that the closer leaders are to the core of the business of teaching and learning, the more they are likely to make a difference to students. Gurr et al. (2003) went a step further and, in a study of five schools in Tasmania, concluded that successful headship examined and monitored students learning, evaluated their needs as well as the processes of their learning. In addition, successful heads care about the

professional development of their teachers (Blase and Blase, 1999; Day et al., 2001a; Stoll, Fink and Earl, 2002). By using formal or informal strategies, head teachers focus on improving the teaching and learning processes. Yet these depend upon the head teachers' own qualities and skills such as support, encouragement, empowerment, discussion, listening and understanding. On this basis, successful leadership influences teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Evans L, 2000) and at the same time, it builds a stronger feeling of loyalty and commitment to school goals by both (Louis, 2007). It is argued that it is through these direct effects on staff and the conditions for teaching and learning, the opportunities for student learning and achievement are increased. Thus, whilst heads have a direct effect upon these, their effects on students is indirect (Hallinger and Heck, 1998).

The learning culture which results is supported and strengthened by the emphasis of successful leadership on people-centred approaches as it focuses on the personal and professional development of other people in their school (MacBeath, 1998; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins, 2006; Day and Leithwood, 2007). These 'people orientation' approaches help heads in forming positive relationships inside and outside schools. Gurr and his colleagues (2006) concluded that 'the quality of relationships was a vital component. Working with and through others was a feature of the way the principals (head teachers) worked ...' (Gurr et al., 2006:43). In the same vein, Day et al. (2001a) in a study in England concluded that successful heads were 'above all, people-centred' (Day et al., 2001a:167).

Furthermore, other scholars argue that successful heads communicate clearly with people and involve them in strategies and tactics by building professional relationships, which foster relational trust, respect and integrity (Bryk and Schneider,

2002; Day, 2005; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou and Kington, 2009). From this literature, it seems that schools with successful heads operate as places where people are treated with respect and are capable of offering their talents, knowledge and skills for their schools improvement.

The degree of teachers' involvement in decision making in school matters (Day et al., 2001a) is related to the nature and extend of the distribution of leadership (Lambert, 2002; Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004; Chapman, Ainscow, Bragg, Gunter, Hull, Mongon, Muijs and West, 2008; Harris, 2008a). Through participatory decision making, successful head teachers build a collaborative climate – in the context that they work- as a basis for developing a sense of ownership and responsibility for school decisions (Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki and Giles, 2005; Møller et al., 2005; Moos et al., 2005). In this way, successful heads achieve the creation of an environment in which everybody shares common values and beliefs. Harris (2004) in a review of two studies with successful heads in England, concluded that 'successful heads recognized the limitation of a singular leadership approach and saw their leadership role as being primarily concerned with empowering others to lead' (Harris 2004:10). In a broader review of research Leithwood et al. (2006:3) claim that 'school leadership has a greater influence on school and students when it is widely distributed'. Both reviews show that successful heads move from a belief in the power of one person to a belief in the inclusion of many in the processes of school leadership.

A further strategy that successful head teachers develop in order to lead schools in complex and unpredictable environments is networking (Veugelers and Zijlstra, 2002;

Jervis-Tracey, 2005). Networking is regarded as an important means for improving education and for providing the capacity for life long learning. Ballantyne et al. (2006) claim, after interviewing 13 leaders who had been involved in a range of network-based reform initiatives, that 'networks gave leaders, practitioners and schools conduits' to knowledge, practice and ideas that exist elsewhere in the system' (Ballantyne, Jackson, Temperley, Jopling and Lieberman, 2006:6). Davies and Davies (2005) in a study with 23 heads found that they had the ability to develop personal and professional networks that provided alternative perspectives from those prevalent in their immediate educational environment.

The discussion so far has analysed multiple practices and strategies which research suggests that heads have developed to improve their schools in different countries. Research emphasises, also, that head teachers in contemporary times are not heroes (Fullan, 1991; Ainsworth, 2009) but that they are passionate and committed to their jobs (Day, 2004b; Sugrue, 2005c; Gurr et al., 2006; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Davies and Brighouse, 2008). They also show care for their own continuing professional development in order to be able to fulfil their complex job (Day et al., 2001a). Research findings demonstrated that a major quality they have is to engage in reflective practices and revisit and review their own commitments, qualities and skills (Day, 2003c). Particularly, heads reflect on their own practices for the purpose of continually improving their practices, strategies and values. In this way, heads model life-long learning in helping teachers, students, and parents to increase their learning capacity and achieve their academic and social goals. According to Barth (1990:72) they become 'lead learners'.

This brief review of the research on successful leadership ends with the most fundamental ingredient which has been identified: the moral and the emotional dimensions (Hargreaves, 1998; Beatty, 2000a; Day et al., 2001b; Sergiovanni, 2001a, Day and Leithwood, 2007). Dempster and Mahony (1998) in a multi-context study showed that 'leaders relied on their values to guide their actions' (Dempster and Mahony, 1998:125). In the same vein Day et al. (2001b) in multi-perspective research with twelve schools in England found that 'good leaders are informed by, and communicate, clear sets of personal and educational values which represent the moral purposes of the school' (Day et al., 2001b:165). Similarly, Sugrue and his colleagues (2005c), using a life history approach with head teachers from Denmark, Norway, England and Ireland, concluded that:

the beliefs, values and commitments that shape and give substance to the passions of principals are the primary forces that are always present regardless of the nature of the immediate task (Sugrue, 2005c:167).

Furthermore, successful leading is an emotional activity (Hargreaves, 1997; Day and Leithwood, 2007). The emotions are undoubtedly present in leaders and teachers and students (Beatty, 2000a). According to Denzin (1984):

emotionality is a circular process that begins and ends with the transactions and actions of the self in the social situation interacting with self and others (Denzin, 1984:2)

Based on this statement the emotional process is created by the interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions of head teachers with people (teachers, students, parents, stakeholders) around them. It is a dual process.

On the one hand is the emotional well being of head teachers (teachers and students) in order to feel safe, motivated and confident to work with commitment and passion.



Beatty (2000a) in a qualitative study with 5 heads in Canada found among others that: (a) it was very important for heads to protect themselves from emotional hurt. Instead of managing their emotions they trusted others and shared their emotions (b) the feelings of insecurity and anxiety that emerged from the weakness of their power to control people were overcome by developing collaboration and adopting distributed practices. Heads, therefore, by 'breaking the silence' (Beatty, 200b) and by developing collaborative practices, sustain their motivation and confidence for leading successfully.

On the other hand, successful leaders provide emotional support to people around them. Day and Leithwood (2007), in reviews of 63 case studies with successful heads conducted in eight countries, found that many of those successful heads demonstrated a high degree of emotional sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of their colleagues, as well as the parents and students served by their schools. Further, research findings showed that successful heads provide other kinds of support for staff, students and their community. These include resources, staff development opportunities and mentoring advice intellectually (Day et al., 2001a; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Harris, 2007). In order to do so, heads themselves demonstrate the possession, of certain qualities and skills for example, diagnostic strategies, emotional and social understanding (empathy, caring etc.). These are important in influencing teachers' motivation, self-efficacy, and commitment to the schools goals and the quality of teaching in the classroom (Evans L., 2000; Noddings, 2006).

Finally, in the context of Cyprus, leadership research is limited. Some years ago Pashiardis (1998) studied effective primary school heads and placed the

characteristics of effective heads into three categories (career, professional and personal dimensions). His study is qualitative and it deals only with the characteristics of heads. It does not differentiate between them.

The limitation of the overwhelming majority of research into successful headship is that most based upon evidence from Western countries. As I will argue in the next chapter (see Chapter 2) this does not always readily transfer to other cultures.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

Studies on successful headship suggest that heads' leadership varies from school to school. Successful heads focus on person-centred leadership by building positive relationships with their staff, caring about others and showing understanding of other people feelings. They constantly communicate a clear set of values and develop a shared vision for their school. Successful heads also promote and care about students and teachers learning. They create opportunities for collaborative learning among staff and continual professional development. These approaches make their school a place that is always ready to cope with a changing and complex environment. There are 'core practices', it seems, that are developed by almost all successful heads regardless of the context. However, researching different leadership contexts, whether personal, organizational or policy is important. Headship is influenced by the broader social and political traditions of the countries in which they work. In the next chapter, I will discuss the role of head teachers within the social context of Cyprus, how their approach differs from those of their colleagues in Cyprus and elsewhere.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF SCHOOLS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

One of the purposes of this study was to explore how ‘successful’ leadership is understood within the social context of Cyprus and how heads’ practices are differentiated from the practices of their colleagues within the same national culture. This chapter will discuss, therefore, the influences of social context on head teachers’ practices, paying particular attention to the case of Cyprus. Firstly, I will describe the situation of the Cypriot Educational System, the pressures on the system to change and the role of head teachers. Secondly, I will illustrate the influences of national and school context on the practices of head teachers. This section will explore how the schools location (rural, urban), and the schools SES (high, medium, low) influence the practices of successful head teachers.

#### **2.2 The Educational Context in Cyprus**

The Cypriot Educational System, in its present form, is very much the outcome of the developments that established the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Cyprus has a population of 738,000 with 345 public and 24 private primary schools. Almost all the private schools are foreign language oriented to serve the foreign residents of the country. In terms of national educational systems, it can be considered small compared to those of Western countries (e.g. Australia, U.K., U.S.A.). Due to the fact the country is small, almost all people involved in teaching know each other, either because they were at university together or they are related. Therefore, they are

mostly familiar with each other and likely to know people in positions of power within the Cypriot Education System.

Educational administration is centralized, with a strong bureaucracy located in Nicosia around the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) headed by a Minister and by a Director-General. The policy making is highly centralized, with specific national goals for the curriculum (see Figure 2.1: The bureaucratic nature of the educational system of Cyprus-primary education). The highest authority for educational policy making is the Council of Ministers. Central authorities have a direct involvement in schools even in micro-management. For example, the MOEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) decides about the weight of the students' school bags. In this context, school head teachers have a limited responsibility for matters that are related to their school (e.g. curriculum development, planning) and they are in constant communication with the school's inspector for the better application of the Ministry's top-down directions and goals. In addition, they have a lot of paper work due to the formal communication system with the Ministry. Head teachers and schools, therefore, have one way communication with the government officials. They work in isolation from their colleagues in other schools, despite the same problems and conditions that the schools share. In contrast, many of the Western countries have developed decentralized and democratic educational systems and have delegated a large amount of responsibilities to head teachers and school communities (Australia, Denmark, U.S.A.).

Moreover, the MOEC prevents head teachers from handling any financial matters. Their role in the allocation of the school budget is nominal, compared to that of head

teachers in many Western countries' who have greater responsibilities for their schools budget. The MOEC has the main role in funding public education either directly or through the allocation of money to local authorities. It includes teaching personnel salaries<sup>1</sup> and every educational need, including the free provision of books. Schools' funding is based on the number of students at each school regardless of families' socioeconomic status and the particular needs of school units. Local authorities are responsible for building maintenance, supplies and the employment of non-teaching staff (cleaners, students' escorts, secretaries) who work in schools. Furthermore, unlike in Western countries (e.g. U.K., U.S.A.), heads in Cyprus have no say in the recruitment of their teaching staff. They must run their schools, build and promote their vision, whoever their teaching staff are. The government believes that all the teachers are skilful, and have the capabilities to respond within any context and needs of the school (Cyprus Parliament Committee Report, 2002).

Despite the small size of the system, it is strongly bureaucratic, inflexible and it lacks responsiveness to changes in local contexts (Pashiardis, 1996; Angelides and Leigh, 2004). It does not pay attention to the special needs of each school - for the Cypriot government; one size fits all (UNESCO, 1998; Kazamias, 2004; Persianis, 2006). For example, the curriculum is fixed for all students. All students in the second grade for instance – even if the class includes immigrant students or students considered as having special needs - are taught from the same language books, despite the level of their language understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> The recruitment of teachers is vested in the independent Education Service Commission.

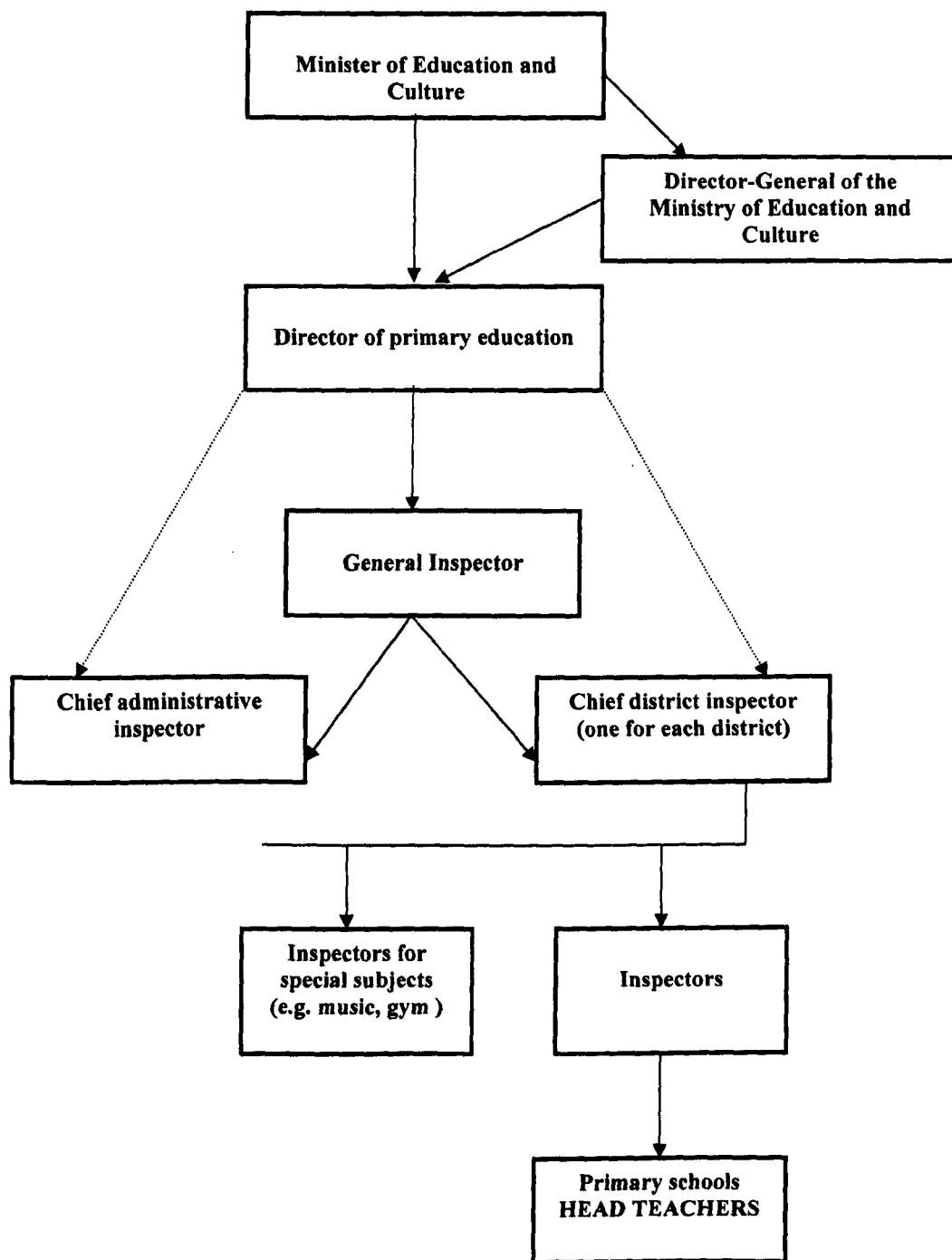


Figure 2.1: The Cyprus Educational System (primary education)

Since the establishment of the current educational system in Cyprus in 1960 the government has not decentralized the system or distributed more responsibilities to local authorities or to head teachers. Governments in most Western countries (e.g. U.K., U.S.A.) respond, according to their schools needs, to the social, cultural, political and technological pressures by introducing educational innovations such as ‘parental choice’, ‘institutional competition’, ‘teacher and school accountability’, ‘students’ outcomes’ and ‘standardized tests’ (Bowe, Ball, and Gold, 1992; Carter and O’Neill, 1995; Grace, 1995). In contrast, the educational policies in the Cypriot education system still remain centralized, excluding parents from the educational processes and continuing to promote a monolithic curriculum (Figure 2.2: Factors influencing headship in Cyprus). Cypriot educational history shows that the small changes that have been made to the educational system so far, are the result of ideas and practices borrowed from Greek educational policies (e.g. curriculum, comprehensive schools) (Kazamias, 2004; Persianis, 2006).

It is clear, then, that the phenomenon of globalization<sup>2</sup> which has influenced smaller countries or non-Western countries for example Malta, to develop educational policies similar to those of Western countries has not yet influenced Cyprus.

However, the cultural contacts -the movement of people from the poorest to the richest countries- and the academic challenges –high accountability- which affect other countries (Ball, 1997; Levin, 1998) also affect Cyprus. For example, schools have to cope with big percentages of minority students. Unlike some other countries they do not have the means to develop special programs or the flexibility to redesign

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<sup>2</sup> In the educational field globalization is presented as an external phenomenon that influences educational changes and explains the common educational policies across a range of countries (Dale, 1999; Dimmock and Walker, 2000b).

the curriculum. At the same time, the government asks schools not to leave any child behind.

### **2.2.1 Qualifications and preparation for headship**

In the Cyprus Educational System the primary head teachers' position is as a result of promotion directly from their teaching position and after a long experience of teaching. For this job only people that have long experience in state primary schools of the country may apply. Particularly, according to the job's descriptions a candidate is qualified to apply for the job only if he/she satisfies the following criteria: (a) a Bachelors degree in primary Education, (b) at least 15 years of experience in the position of primary school teacher- the cases of head promotions with less than 15 years of experience are very rare. Usually heads have more than 20-25 years of teaching experience, (c) 3 years of experience at the position of deputy head, (d) the sum of the candidate's last three evaluations (given by inspectors) which must be higher than the rest of the candidates, (e) a 'successful' interview with the Education Service Commission which it is responsible for all the promotions in the Educational System. The above criteria show that the system promotes experienced teachers to head teachers' positions who may have little professional knowledge on educational leadership and management. In this respect, they need support in order to lead their schools.

The system provides for only 'initial' head teachers' education, sometime between the first and second year of their experience as heads (Figure 2.2: Factors influencing headship in Cyprus). This kind of education is compulsory, lasts for 15 days- once a week – and based on the following subjects areas: (1)The role of head teachers as



leaders, (2) Teachers evaluation, (3) Management and administration of primary schools, (4) Headship approaches, (5) Computer Science, (6) Contemporary teaching approaches, (7) School administration, (8) Educational research in schools, (9) School and student evaluation, (10) Cognitive and social development, (11) Parental participation in education, (12) Multicultural education, (13) Environmental studies, (14) Health education and (15) the European dimensions of education (MOEC and Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, 2006). It is interesting to note that while the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus is responsible for the planning of those education programmes, the people responsible for them have no studies in the subject areas of leadership and management in education.

By and large, these observations about the Cyprus educational context show that heads have limited latitude as the MOEC continues to impose top-down policies on important parts of school management and leadership. This research, therefore, explores what successful head teachers' practices under those circumstances are and whether, and how, they overcome such policy restraints.

In the next section I will discuss three local pressures on the education system to change and improve the quality of schooling.

### **2.2.2 Pressures to change**

Apart from the global pressures on educational policy, in the last decade there have been three significant reasons that make the strain even greater for the system in Cyprus: The UNESCO appraisal (UNESCO, 1997), the Kazamias report<sup>3</sup> (Kazamias, 2004) and the entry into the European Union in 2004. The first pressure was the publication of the 'Appraisal Study on the Cyprus Educational System' (UNESCO, 1997). This report pointed out the serious problems facing the Cypriot Education System: lack of cohesion (p. 26), communication and co-ordination among the various departments and services of the Ministry of Education (p. 20); the ineffectiveness of teaching approaches used in mixed-ability classes (p. 37); the heavy and inflexible curriculum (p. 30); the role of inspectors (p. 21); the downgrading of the role of the school unit (p. 22); and the non-existence mechanisms for research and evaluation in the education system (p. 61). Regarding headship, the UNESCO report underlined the lack of responsibility given to head teachers as Ministry officials continued to take key decisions. It noted that inspectors were involved in disciplinary matters for school staff and were responsible for giving approval for various school activities, and providing in-service training seminars for teachers, instead of head teachers. Moreover, the UNESCO report detected that the level of district administration seemed excessive for the size of the country and the number of schools, and that it could be reduced by delegating more responsibility to head teachers. In general, it suggested that 'the whole structure of school management would also require review as there appeared to be significant gap at middle management level' (UNESCO 1997:25) These concerns were not new for those

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<sup>3</sup> Both UNESCO report (1997) and Kazamias report (2004) were requested by the government.

within the Ministry of Education, but the publication of a study from an international organisation has sparked a debate about the need for change. Ten years later, nothing seems to have changed.

Unfortunately, change has not yet become reality due to a number of barriers that were discussed in the mass media (Philelefttheros, 1997; 1998) and in journal articles (Angelides and Leigh, 2004). One barrier to change was teachers unions who thought that their interests would be threatened, so they blocked the suggestions of the UNESCO report (Angelides, 2009 in press). A second barrier to change came from policy makers' and governing bodies' conservatism (Pashiardis, 2006). Particularly, there was lack of political initiatives for changes (Persianis, 2006). In this sense, there were few pressures on the government to change. Consequently, there were not any changes for improvement in schools (curriculum, decentralization, the upgrade the role of school and particularly those of heads).

The second pressure on Cypriot Educational Policy was the educational reform plan developed by seven academics led by Kazamias (Kazamias, 2004) at the behest of the government. This plan identified the disadvantages of the system and suggested changes to the whole system in order to enhance the quality of education. These included suggestions for 'flexibility', 'democracy', and the promotion of 'social justice' in Cypriot education. Teachers unions, parents, students and the society in general welcomed the Kazamias report, because they seemed to acknowledge the need for change in the Cypriot Education System and at schools in particular. The deadline for the government's decision regarding the implementation or not of this reform expired at the end of December 2004. Recently, Kazamias (2008) reported in a

newspaper interview that despite the declaration of the MOEC that the educational reform recommendations would be implemented, there is a lack of real political will to do so.

A third pressure to change existing Cypriot educational policy is the challenge of the European Union (E.U). Cyprus became a member state in May 2004. The implementation of European Acts (e.g. Treaty of Lisbon: Taking Europe into the 21<sup>st</sup> century) and the need to prepare a workforce ready to compete with other E.U. countries, has increased the pressure on the Ministry of Education for change (Stylianou, 2008). For example, during the last few years the MOEC has developed a far reaching programme for staff development on educational technology. In addition, research has been carried out between 2005 and 2006 with 619 teachers from primary and secondary schools which showed that only one out of thirty (1:30) teachers has experienced formal professional development (Theophilides, Ioannidou-Koutselini, Martidou-Forsier, Michailidou-Euripidou and Mpouzakis, 2008). In contrast, the aim of the E.U. for teachers' formal professional development is 1:3. On this basis, the MOEC is discussing possible future action to increase the involvement of teachers in developmental programs (Stylianou, 2008).

The discussion above illustrates that there have been a number of pressures on the Cyprus Education System to become more decentralized and democratic in order to respond to the demands of contemporary times. However, the educational authorities are very sceptical about adopting contemporary strategies and ideas; it seems that they hesitate to change and they are afraid of the lack of control over the heads, students

and parents (Pashiardis, 2004). But they still have high expectations from schools and especially head teachers.

The issues discussed above provided the contexts in which this study was undertaken (see Table 2.1: Conditions of service of heads in Cyprus and in Western countries).

Heads have to manage the social, economical, technological, and cultural demands, at the same time as the pressures from governmental policy not to leave any child behind.

### **2.3 Conditions of service of heads in Cyprus and in Western countries**

The Table 2.1 illustrates the conditions of service of heads both in Cyprus and in some Western countries (e.g. Australia, Denmark, Finland, U.K., U.S.A.). There is a differentiation in service conditions even among the Western countries as the educational systems in which heads serve vary. On the one hand, the Cypriot heads work in a centralized system, with specific inflexible structures, they implement its rules and regulations (e.g. recruitment of staff, no control/responsibility on school budget, heavy curriculum, and limited tenure at school), they are accountable to the Ministry - mainly for school processes - and they have to cope with the changing environment without any support. On the other hand, heads in Western countries work in more flexible structures (decentralization, flexible curriculum) (e.g. Denmark, Finland), they have the chance to create the school environment (e.g. long tenure at a school, school based management, staff recruitment, staff development), they are accountable to the government and parents for the quality of education they offer (e.g. market forces). Furthermore, head teachers in Cyprus have short careers as heads as they are promoted after a long period of service as teachers and usually not earlier

than 50 years of age. The Ministry offers to newly promoted heads a preparation program but there is no in-service education. In Western countries heads have long careers as heads and the Ministries of their countries support them to overcome the job difficulties and provide initial and continual professional development (e.g. in-service education, networking, etc). Finally, there is little research evidence in Cyprus regarding leadership in education, in contrast to those Western countries where there is an extended body of research literature.

International comparisons, of course, are difficult to draw because the main mass of evidence regarding head teachers practices comes from Western countries like Australia, Canada, Norway, the U.K., and the U.S.A. For example, in Denmark the democratic approach of the education system allows teachers and head teachers to design their own curriculum, to develop networks and to develop learning communities (Moos et al., 2005). Cultural validity is, therefore, an important factor in studying successful leadership (Dimmock and Walker, 2000a) and this applies to Cyprus, where the system is more centralized and the democratic values are limited (see Table 2.1: Conditions of service of heads in Cyprus and in Western countries).

In the following section I will discuss more fully the influences of national context on leadership practices.

### Conditions of service of heads in Cyprus and in Western countries

Cyprus	Western countries
Bureaucratic, religious based	Market forces (U.K.)
Centralized, no budget for heads in order to spend for school needs	Decentralized, school based management (Australia)
Staff is appointed by the government	Heads (with a team) hire staff (U.K., U.S.A.)
Rotation policy of heads and teachers – limited tenures at schools (see section 2.4.2.2)	Long service at a school (U.K., U.S.A.)
Heavy and inflexible curriculum No curriculum consultation	Flexible curriculum (Denmark) Curriculum Consultation (U.K.)
Few research findings regarding leadership and education	Research focus on leadership (Australia, U.K., U.S.A.)
Accountable mainly to the government about processes and school management	Strong accountability for students achievement, achievement test (U.K.)
Government demands to cope with the changing environment without changing the structures or the policies.	There are governments' interventions in policies to restructure their education (Australia, Finland, U.K.)
Recruitment system: Become heads after a promotion, they have served as teachers for a long period of time (serve short periods of time at heads' position)	Recruitment system: Become heads after a personal decision (usually serve at school for long periods of time, e.g., 10-15 years) (Australia, U.K., U.S.A.,)
Only one initial education programme for heads. It is designed by persons that have no leadership and management background.	Formal development for prospective and newly appointed leaders is a norm (U.K.) Special institutions that focuses on heads development (U.K., U.S.A.)
Students attend the school of their neighbourhood	Parental choice-Parents decide the school that their children will attend (U.K.)

Table 2.1: Conditions of service of heads in Cyprus and in Western countries

## 2.4 National Context

Researchers have studied the influence of national contexts on leadership practices and the possibility of transferability of 'successful' leadership qualities to heads' practices in different countries (Cheng, 2000; Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000). A small number of international studies have investigated the influences of the national context and contrasted the ways head teachers in different countries lead their schools (Bolman and Deal, 1992; Heck, 1996; Moos and Dempster, 1998; Fishman, 1999; Dimmock and Walker, 2000a; Day and Leithwood, 2007). For example, Day and his colleagues (2007) synthesized the results of 63 multiple case studies on successful head teacher leadership in seven countries: Australia, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and U.S.A. They concluded that successful leadership practices are common across contexts in general form, but highly adaptable and contingent in their specific enactment. This means that, on the one hand, successful heads draw upon the same repertoire of leadership practices whilst holding values, beliefs and norms of their society which guide their understanding of the role and purpose of the school. There is, therefore, a fascinating interplay between social culture, school context and the enactment of successful leadership. Reeves et al. (1998a) in a three country study that involved leaders from Denmark, England and Scotland, suggested that:

... the school leader needs to be defined not only in terms of the qualities of the individual but also in terms of their fitness to a context which itself is subject to continuities as well as change and development both from forces 'within' the school and those in the wider environment (Reeves et al., 1998a:57-58).

For example, being a head teacher in a British school is different from being a head teacher in Cyprus. The British educational policy is based on market forces and on school based management, while the Cyprus Educational System is bureaucratic,



centralized, religious based (see section 2.3.1) and all the decisions are taken from the top. The degree of centralization and the variation of cultures and society structures in such nations (U.K. and Cyprus) provide a qualitatively different educational context for head teachers (Table 2.1: Conditions of service of heads in Cyprus and in Western countries). Being a head teacher, therefore, differs according to the norms and traditions of the society, as well as according to the educational system of the country.

With this in mind, the transference of research evidence from one country to another, or from one kind of national culture to the another, might be risky (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000; Gronn and Ribbins, 2003). Moos and Dempster's (1998) comparative research has showed how local factors influence head teachers' practice:

One major source of influence on their (heads) perceptions is their own expectations of their educational partners (politicians, local community members, parents, school boards, teachers and students) (Moos and Dempster, 1998:99).

In the next sections I will discuss first the influences of Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus in education as a specific cultural characteristic of Cyprus context, and second the influences of school context (external and internal) on leadership practices.

#### **2.4.1 The influences of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus in education**

The Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus has been the strongest influence for the education in Cyprus (Karagiorgis, 1986; Persianis, 1990; Theophilides, 2007), as the notions of religion and education have been interrelated for centuries (Figure 2.2: Factors influencing headship in Cyprus). Historically, the first schools in Cyprus were established by the Church in 1812. It was the Church that cared about their maintenance, offering its priests to act as teachers and the Church's books to be

teaching books (Persianis, 1978). Through the centuries, the church acted as a custodian to the foreign conquerors in order to keep education focused on the national and religious values. In this sense, the educational policy that has been established in 1960 was influenced by the Church's values, principles, rules and regulations (Persianis, 1978, 2006). Since then, there has not been done any serious change in education policies. Therefore, the Orthodox religion is very close related to education. The relationship between Church and education is being continued –though not with the same intensity as in the past- in contemporary times. For example, it has representatives in the discussions about educational reform (Holy Synod, 2005) and its representatives (Arch-bishop, bishops) intervene in the educational decisions and policies that the Ministry announces (e.g. educational reform, history books, private education, and religion education in schools) (Hasapopoulos, 2009).

Heads – who are usually aged over 50's - have been nurtured with the church's principles and values from very early in their lives and at this time in their careers they are responsible to implement policies that are influenced by the Church. This specific historical and national cultural characteristic might affect their leading practices and qualities.

In the following section I will explore the influences of school context on leadership practices.

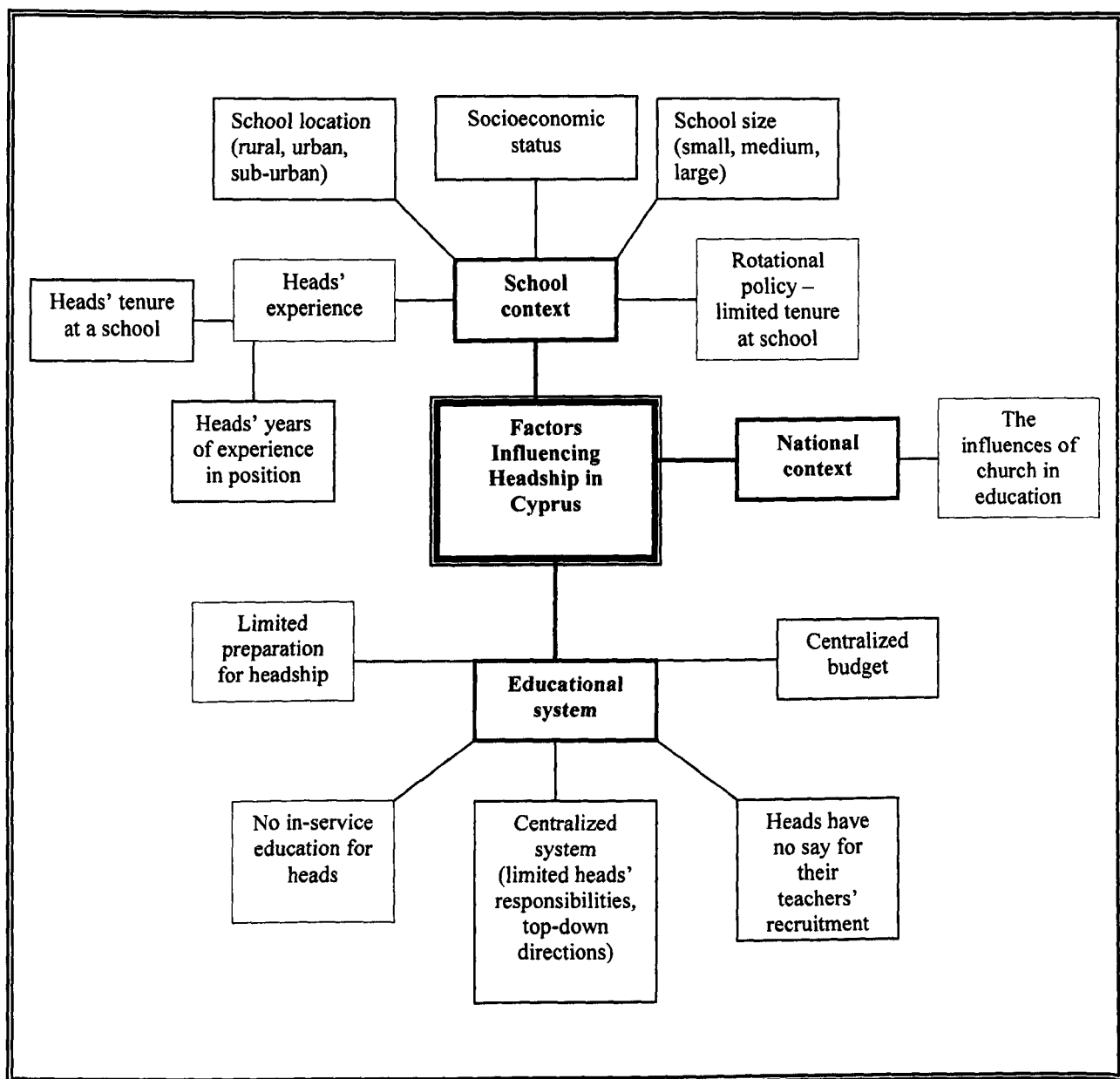


Figure 2.2: Factors influencing headship in Cyprus

## **2.5 School Context**

School context is a significant factor in leadership success. School context in this study refers to the internal and external environment of the school (Figure 2.2: Factors influencing headship in Cyprus). The internal environment includes the gender of the head teacher, the size of the school, the staff and the experience of the head teacher. The external environment includes the socio-economic status (SES) of schools that successful head teachers operate in and the school location (urban or rural areas).

Hallinger and Heck (1999), in a review of the research that is related to school context and leadership, concluded that:

These findings hint at the relationship between wider community context, the corresponding school culture and the role of the principal. The different extent of contact between school staff and community is important because teacher and administrator attitudes appear to be shaped by expectations and beliefs of the wider community (Hallinger and Heck 1999:183).

These research findings seem to agree with the results of Day et al. (2000) who point out that head teachers, in order to provide successful leadership to their schools, adopt values-led contingency approaches to leadership, adapting their work practices but not values to the particular school context. In the following sections I will explore the influence of external and internal school context on leadership practices.

### **2.5.1 External school context**

#### **2.5.1.1 School location**

The first aspect of school context relates to the external environment of a school which includes its location (urban, rural areas) and its SES. Each of these factors appears to influence heads' leadership practices (see Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Hallinger, Bickman and Davis, 1996; McMahon, Bishop, Carrol

and McNally, 1996; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; Day et al., 2001a; Franey, 2002; Harris, 2002; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Chapman et al., 2008). Day and his colleagues (2008a) found that heads' leadership activity varied by school location. School context may be categorized in three types: urban, rural and suburban areas. For example, head teachers in urban contexts may have to deal with big schools, ethnic minorities, heterogeneity of students, limited parental involvement and a high degree of staff and student mobility (Englert, 1993) whereas these in rural contexts may not. Research also indicates that the educational expectations generated by parents from different educational backgrounds are likely to differ significantly (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Moos, Krejsler, Kofod and Jensen, 2005). In contrast, heads in rural areas deal with smaller schools, a more homogenized student population and with people that know each other. For example, headship practices in a school at the centre of a town in which students come from economically poor families – a multicultural school- and a village school where the students are homogenized, will expectedly be different. In this study - as I will explain in the next chapter – I only studied head teachers who led schools in urban areas, focusing on a limited number of contextual variations in order to identify the similarities and differences between heads in similar socio-economic contexts.

In Cyprus, the school location in urban areas is associated with the parents SES. According to a regulation of the MOEC in Cyprus, children must attend the school in their neighbourhood. Thus, children who come from low income parents live in the poorer areas of the town. They attend the school in their neighbourhood, and so, by definition, this becomes a low SES school. The children that come from high SES

families and live in the rich areas of the town attend the school in their neighbourhood which become high SES school.

#### **2.5.1.2 School socioeconomic status (SES)**

Apart from the school location, a number of studies agree that another key factor which influences heads' practices is the socioeconomic status of the school population (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Hallinger et al., 1996; McMahon et al., 1996; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; Franey, 2002). Although the research findings in this area are limited, in the last decade there has been considerable interest in studying leadership practices in low SES schools (Harris, 2002; Day, 2005; West et al., 2005; Harris, Chapman, Muijs, Russ and Stoll, 2006; Ylimaki, Jacobson and Drysdale, 2007). Specifically, research by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) with ten primary school head teachers, revealed that those in low and high SES schools, worked differently in defining the mission. Similarly, Harris and Chapman (2002), in a study with ten English secondary schools that were facing challenging circumstances, found that heads drew attention to the need to manage tensions and problems related to their particular circumstances and contexts. Hallinger et al. (1996:541) concluded that heads in higher SES schools 'exercised more active instructional leadership' than their counterparts in schools serving students of lower SES. Finally, Day (2005a) in a study with ten successful English head teachers, in schools located in challenging socio-economic contexts, found that they emphasised the improvement of student achievement within ethics of care, compassion and social justice.

The SES of a school also affects head teachers' behaviour with respect to social networks (Smylie, Crowson, Chou and Levin, 1994). According to research findings, the relationship of leaders with parents and the broader community in low SES schools is weaker although leaders make continued efforts to communicate and involve them in school activities (Hallinger and Heck, 1999). In contrast, in high SES schools there are strong relationships and collaboration with parents, and at the same time heads try to expand the boundaries of collaboration (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Hayes, 1995).

In Cyprus the government historically treats all schools in the same way, without considering the special needs or difficulties of each school. For example, heads in low SES schools are alone in coping with the difficulties that develop due to the schools SES. It would be important, then, to understand how they motivate teachers or develop commitment to school goals in an environment that usually disappoints teachers.

### **2.5.2 Internal school context**

The second aspect of school context is the influence of its internal environment. This includes the school size (small, medium, large), the school staff, the head teachers' gender (male, female) and the heads experiences. A number of researchers argue that successful heads use a variety of strategies and methods according to the internal environment (context) of their school (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger et al., 1996; Reeves, Mahony and Moos, 1997; Day et al., 2000; Macmillan, 2000; Harris, 2002; Clarke and Wildy, 2004; Day and Leithwood, 2007). For example, a new head leads a school differently from an experienced head. Moreover, heads who lead small schools

may develop closer relationships with their staff and students than their colleagues who lead big schools (Southworth, 2004). The aim of this section is to explore how the experience of a head influences his/her practices, and finally, to discuss how the policy of moving heads around schools affects their performance.

#### **2.5.2.1 Head teachers' experience**

The aim of this section is to examine the relationship between heads' experience and their level of success. Based on this study's research questions, heads' experience may be analysed in two dimensions: (a) how head teachers' years of experience in the position influence their success and (b) how the policy of head teachers' rotation among schools may affect heads' performance and their ability to be successful. By using the term 'experience' I mean the length of their career as a head teacher and the length of their tenure at a school. Heads' experiences are important for this research because they help us to understand better and with more depth the reality of school. Research shows that heads develop different level of success as they have different priorities in various phases of their careers and they develop different learning needs (Macmillan, 1998; Weindling, 1999; Day, 2003b; Sugrue, 2005b).

Head teachers' careers in Cyprus are not the same as described above, because their position is as a result of promotion directly from their teaching position and after a long experience of teaching. During the last decade the length of careers in headship vary from six months to seven years before their retirement. This shows that head teachers in the Cypriot Education System experience short tenures as head teachers.



### **2.5.2.2 Rotation policy**

There is also a policy in the education system in Cyprus that imposes the rotation of heads from school to school (Figure 2.2: Factors influencing headship in Cyprus). The Education Service Commission has the responsibility for the implementation of this rotation policy on the basis of bureaucratic criteria. The regulation states that each head after promotion, should serve in a rural area for at least two years and after that period he/she may move to an urban area in which he/she could stay at a school for a maximum of five years. It is clear then that heads in the Cypriot Education System experience short tenures in the position of headship and they are forced under the regulations to move around schools. Consequently, they experience different 'career phases' from heads in Western countries. This was investigated in this study through the analysis of the experiences of head teachers' and teachers'.

There are few studies that examine heads rotation and provide insight into the process of leaders adaptation to their new settings and the effects on school staff (Macmillan, 2000; Hargreaves et al. 2003; Fink and Brayman, 2004). For example, in Ontario (Canada), this rotation policy is based on the belief that heads long service at a school results in boredom or lack of motivation and that, by moving them around schools, they will be encouraged to tackle new challenges (Macmillan, 1998). In Cyprus this policy has been established since the early 1970s. It was initially proposed by the teachers' union (teachers' union which also represents head teachers) to provide the opportunity for teachers and head teachers to work at schools that are close to their residence. It is clear, then, that heads in Cyprus do not remain in their schools like their colleagues in most Western countries. Despite this, some head teachers develop

and sustain shared educational goals among staff, establish an environment of commitment and lead their schools to improve. In this study, I explored what these heads have done to achieve success.

Macmillan (2000) in a study with five secondary schools heads reports that:

... the policy of regularly rotating principals within a system is a flawed one, perhaps fatally so. When leadership succession is regular and routinized, teachers are likely to build resilient cultures which inoculate them against the effects of succession. Principals are seen as being loyal to the system, more than to the school. Change efforts are regarded as ephemeral and opportunistic ... trying to reinvigorate school leadership by bureaucratizing the rotation of principals is futile (Macmillan 2000:68).

Hargreaves et al. (2003) through a series of four case studies looked at heads' succession in relation to the impact of rotation and their experience at the schools in which they worked. Their findings showed that the practice in some places of regularly moving heads tended to turn headship 'into an accelerating carousel of principal rotation in which the principals go round and round while the schools just go up and down' (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman and White, 2003:81). The head teachers' rotation policy does not seem to be successful in these education systems.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have sought to map out the social context of heads in schools in Cyprus. I have discussed both national and school contexts and their influences on head teachers' practices. On the one hand, national context is more related to values, beliefs, the social character and the educational system. On the other hand school context is connected to the local characteristics of a community. Successful heads need to be in a constant interaction with their internal and external environment in order to adopt and adapt their practices to the goals and needs of their schools.

Although ‘almost all successful heads draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices’ (Leithwood et al. 2008: 29), ‘leadership cannot be separated from the context in which leadership is exerted’ (Leithwood and Riehl 2003:9). In the next chapter, I investigate the leadership strategies and the essential qualities that help heads to be successful in achieving school goals.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN CHANGING TIMES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study focuses on the skills, qualities, practices and values of successful Cypriot head teachers' leadership in changing times. In chapter one I explored the findings from international research on successful head teachers leadership. In chapter two I described the influences of social context on head teachers practices, paying particular attention to the case of Cyprus, focusing on school SES, school size and head teachers experience.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the head teachers' leadership strategies used to achieve school goals and their essential qualities which make them successful.

First, I will discuss the nature of leadership and management in Cypriot schools and I will explore how the international literature defines leadership and management. I will, then, present a number of leadership models which head teachers develop as strategies to achieve school goals. Finally, I will investigate the research findings about essential leadership qualities for successful leading: 'emotional work', 'moral leadership' and 'the role of distributed leadership'. The analysis of this literature helped me initially to form decisions about the methodological framework of this study. Later, it informed the way I analyzed the data which enabled me to explain how and why heads become successful in their schools.

### **3.2 The Nature of Leadership and Management in Cyprus Schools**

Since this study is related to the context of Cyprus, it is necessary to present how the terms 'leadership' and 'management' have been developed in primary schools in Cyprus. According to the Cyprus public service regulation, primary school head teachers only have management and teaching responsibilities. They are accountable for the smooth operation of schools and the application of all the circulars and directions that the MOEC announces (MOEC, 1997, 1998). In addition, they have a lot of day-to-day paper work and constant communication with the MOEC in order to report the necessary evaluations and information (e.g. teachers' evaluation, school goals success). The regulations do not mention any leadership abilities that heads are required to develop during their experience. However, the external and internal environment of the schools, even in Cyprus, is changing. The work of head teachers is becoming complex and non-linear. For example, in the last decade there has been a massive increase of immigrant students in rural and urban public schools of Cyprus (MOEC, 2007). On the one hand, the leadership conditions have changed as the students' and community needs are changing. Heads attempted to find solutions to the problems that have been raised due to the new situations (e.g. communication needs with students and their parents, students' language enhancement) in order for the school to achieve its goals. On the other hand, the government does not support successfully schools to cope with these changes as there is lack of in-service training concerned with teaching in a multicultural society, the curriculum is the same for all the students and there are no people who know the native language of foreign students in schools. With these conditions, head teachers in Cyprus develop leadership practices despite the non-existence regulations for leadership. It is interesting then, to

explore the practices of successful head teachers either leading or managing their schools.

As a result of the lack of regulations regarding the leadership responsibilities for head teachers in Cyprus, and since this study is about leadership, it is necessary to review the international literature on headship. It is important to discuss how the international literature distinguish the meaning of the terms 'leadership' and 'management' and their role in head teachers' work through the years. Management is essentially about ensuring that the schools function smoothly on a daily basis and leadership is about ensuring that schools runs somewhere (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Since the purpose of this study is to identify and investigate successful headship practices, it will be helpful to analyse these terms and outline their boundaries in these changing times.

In the past, some authors believed that there was no difference between management and leadership and that the activities were interchangeable. Others argued that there were great differences. Bennis (1993) described this difference as follows:

The manager maintains; the leader develops.

The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.

The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.

The manager has his eye on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon.

The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it (Bennis, 1993:214).

In the last decade the concepts of management and leadership have been seen as complementary (Fidler, 1997; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999; Day et al., 2000). Both are essential for the effective operation of schools. On the one hand, management influence is related to the structural attributes (technical side) of schools,

and on the other hand, the core of leadership is personal action. Day et al. (2000) concluded in their research with successful heads that:

While it is evident that management and leadership as constructs overlap, they remain qualitatively different functions. Leadership is essentially the process of building and maintaining a sense of vision for the organization whereas, in contrast, management is the co-ordination, support and monitoring of organizational activities (Day et al., 2000:135).

In the same vein, West-Burnham (1997:117) presents the difference between leadership and management in the following table:

Leadership is concerned with:	Managing is concerned with:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Strategic issues</li> <li>• Transformation</li> <li>• Ends</li> <li>• People</li> <li>• Doing the right things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Operational issues</li> <li>• Transaction</li> <li>• Means</li> <li>• Systems</li> <li>• Doing things right</li> </ul>

Table 3.1: Leadership and management West-Burnham (1997:117)

Leadership is equated with transformation, development and movement, and management with stability and maintenance (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Sergiovanni, 2001b). Leadership is about direction and influence. It is a process that is value-driven in order to accomplish purposeful learning (knowledge, social, emotional) for all the participants in the school. Successful heads lead and manage at the same time. In this sense, headship has no recipe to follow; they have to manage in many ways the complex and unpredictable situations in their schools. For this reason, they adopt a variety of leadership strategies which help them to achieve school goals and priorities. These strategies have emerged either from research or theorizing and have been introduced as leadership models or approaches. The focus of attention in the

following section is on those leadership models that could be useful in developing the research plan and at the same time in informing the analysis of this research data.

### **3.3 Models of Leadership**

The literature on leadership argues that educational change and the management of complexity and unpredictability demand complex and multi-dimensional actions by heads (Morrison, 2002; Sugrue and Furlong, 2002; Louis, 2003; Day and Leithwood, 2007). A number of leadership models advocate that their use could help heads to achieve change. Reviewing the literature I found a number of leadership models that heads adopt to lead schools, such as: invitational leadership (Stoll and Fink, 1995), emotional leadership (Beatty, 2000), managerial leadership (Yukl, 1989), strategic leadership (Davies and Davies, 2005), transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Leithwood, 1992), transactional leadership (Burns, 1978), ethical leadership (Starratt, 2004), democratic leadership (Woods, 2005). Leithwood (2003) explains that:

Most contemporary theories of leadership suggest that leadership cannot be separated from the context in which leadership is exerted. Leadership is contingent on the setting, the nature of social organization, the goals being perused, the individual involved, resources and timeframes and many other factors (Leithwood 2003:9)

In this sense, leadership can take many forms and successful heads adopt different strategies in order to serve and achieve school needs and goals. In this review I will focus on: (a) transformational and learning-centred leadership models that are associated with educational change. According to Leithwood and his colleagues (1999) both models appeared the most frequently in 121 articles amongst four journals; and (b) the transactional leadership model which is related to stability and rational approaches of leadership. The transactional model seems to be connected to



the context of the Cyprus Educational System because of its strong hierarchal character and the lack of initiatives for changes (see Chapter 2).

### **3.3.1 Learning-centred leadership**

Learning-centred leadership (Darling-Hammond, 1997; DuFour, 2002; Southworth, 2005) constitutes a redefinition of the term of 'instructional' leadership (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Smith and Andrews, 1989) which has been developed in North America over the previous decades. Instructional leadership mainly refers to the teaching qualities and skills of head teachers and it emphasises 'the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students' (Leithwood et al., 1999:8). While learning-centred leaders primary focus is to put students and adults learning at the centre of their leadership and to serve as the lead learners (DuFour, 2002). It is mostly concerned with two way communication between heads and teachers, focusing on the improvement of learning abilities for all the people that are engaged in the schools activities. In the following discussion I will use the term learning-centred leadership and I will use research evidence that are linked to instructional leadership as the two meanings have more similarities than differences.

Research evidence derived from the study of Blase and Blase (1998) among 800 teachers working in elementary, middle and high schools of the U.S.A., as well as the study of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) among 10 elementary school heads, shed light on the learning-centred leadership concept. Both studies showed that successful learning-centred leadership could be achieved by following practices: (1) defining school mission by framing and communicating the schools goals; (2) being actively

involved in co-ordination of the curriculum, in monitoring the progress of students and in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum; and supervising and evaluating teachers' practice; (3) they promoting a positive school climate by giving significant motivation to teachers and students and by walking around during school time in order to be closer to them. Moreover, successful learning-centred leaders stress the importance of teachers' professional development. Specifically, they promote teachers' professional growth by emphasising teaching and learning, modelling expected methods and behaviours, supporting peer coaching, action research and teacher collaboration. In addition to that, they foster teacher's reflection by modelling, classroom observation, dialogue, suggestion and praise. Marks and Printy (2003) in a study in 24 elementary, middle and high schools in the U.S.A. moved a step forward. They concluded that learning-centred leadership (their model is named shared instructional leadership) involved the active collaboration of heads and teachers. Heads sought out the ideas, insights and expertise of teachers in areas of curriculum, instruction and assessment. They worked together for the school's improvement.

Learning-centred leadership, therefore, encompasses mobility - the ability to adjust to change, as the staff are constantly developing. Those strategies bring together the knowledge, skills and experience of the people in a school and promote shared learning and improvement in times of change.

### 3.3.2 Transactional leadership

The transactional model of leadership is based on exchange relationships between leaders and followers as it puts them at opposite ends of the continuum. This happens because the main purpose of transactional leadership is to develop a trading relationship with the members of a school by satisfying basic largely extrinsic motives and needs. Pay, status and similar kinds of rewards are exchanged for work effort and the values emphasized are those related to the exchange process (Burns, 1978). Blase and Anderson (1995) underline that in this climate, leaders and followers try to achieve separate individual goals instead of a unified purpose. According to Leithwood (1992) transactional leadership is:

based on an exchange of services (from teacher, for example) for various kinds of rewards (salary, recognition, intrinsic rewards) that the leader controls, at least in part. Transactional leadership practices some claim, help people recognize what needs to be done in order to reach a desired outcome and may also increase their confidence and motivation (Leithwood, 1992:9).

The emphasis of this type of leadership is on the management of school structures rather than on changing cultures, it involves focusing on fulfilling the instrumental purposes of the school: developing plans, ensuring task completion, facilitating information flow and working well with teachers (Stoll and Fink, 1995), though it does not intrude much upon teachers' practices. Heads attempt to avoid teachers, suppress dialogue and exercise control through formal structures and the enforcement of policies and rules (Blase and Anderson, 1995). This leads to school stability in terms of purpose, curriculum and procedures. Such practices find difficulties in recovering from complex situations and do little for changing or reforming schools (Leithwood et al., 1999). Transactional leaders are interested in developing trading relationships rather than developing commitment from school staff.

Essentially, transactional leadership is best implemented in those systems and schools that wish to maintain the status quo. In contrast, schools that promote or are required to promote change and development require more dynamic models of leadership.

### **3.3.3 Transformational leadership**

The transformational leadership model is one example of a perspective which considers leadership in changing times. It has been the subject of systematic inquiry in non school organizations for several decades (House, 1977; Burns, 1978; Bass and Avolio, 1994). The transformational leadership perspective in schools, has been studied and described mainly by Leithwood and his colleagues: (Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood and Jantzi 1999; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). However, in the literature on leadership a variety of terms are used to describe transformational leadership. These terms seem to overlap with others like: charismatic leadership (Boal and Bryson, 1988), visionary leadership (Nanus, 1992) and cultural leadership (Fullan, 1991, 1992). Transformational leadership according to Starratt (1999) is about building common goals by ‘attempts to elevate members’ self-centred attitudes, values and beliefs to higher, altruistic attitudes, values and beliefs’ (Starratt 1999:25). Leithwood et al. (1999) explain that this form of leadership assumes that:

... the central focus of leadership ought to be *the commitments and capacities of organizational members*. Higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assumed to result extra effort and greater productivity (Leithwood et al., 1999:9, original emphasis).

Based on the above, transformational heads develop a high level relationship with their staff, and they seek to ensure that the school is striving to get better and better.

Transformational heads achieve this improvement not only by managing school structures but by impacting purpose upon the culture of all the school in order to change it (Leithwood 1992; Geijsel, Slegers and van de Berg, 1999). Research evidence showed that transformational leadership approaches influenced school conditions (e.g. teacher commitment, job satisfaction, school culture, school planning and strategies for change); each of those conditions contributed to student learning (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999). In essence, transformational leadership helps schools to improve in changing times by reforming school cultures and developing moral connections among people.

So far, I have discussed three models that successful heads might adopt or put into practice in order to respond to the changing environment and to the needs of their students, parents and the community. While their practices vary from context to context, they follow a values-led leadership by demonstrating certain leadership qualities (Day et al., 2000). In the next section, I will explore research reports that are related to essential leadership qualities.

### **3.4 Essential Leadership Qualities**

Research findings show that successful leadership is related to the personal qualities of school leaders. These qualities are based on successful head teachers' educational, personal and social values. In this section, I will discuss three leadership qualities: the emotional work of leaders, moral leadership and distributed leadership.

### **3.4.1 Emotional work and leadership**

In the Cypriot Educational System, the role of headship is designed to have more rational rather than emotional character (Theophilides, 1994). According to the heads' job descriptions the emphasis of their duties is on 'manage', 'control', 'observation' 'implementation of circulations', and 'personal responsibility' (MOEC, 1997:68). The rules and regulations of the system demand heads accomplish a certain job with limited personal or emotional involvement. Paradoxically, the small size of the Cypriot Education System allows people to get to know each other and to develop close and friendly relationships. The regulations, for strict emotional control in order to maintain the rational appearance in headship, are difficult to put into practice. They use their emotions and feelings in their day-to-day practices (Pashiardis, 1998).

International leadership research argues that educational change and the management of complexity and unpredictability by heads require more than a technical and rational effort (Block, 1987; Goleman, 1998; Beatty, 2000; James and Vince, 2001; Beatty and Brew, 2004; Harris, 2007). Both concepts demand complex and multi-dimensional actions. Literature suggests that emotions play a central role in head teachers leadership and the way they achieve change (Stoll, Fink and Earl, 2003; Zorn and Boler, 2007) It acknowledges that emotions are relevant to leaders' work in terms of themes that include raising self-esteem, restoring hope and building morale, developing the feeling of safety in taking risks, building mutual respect and showing care, support and honesty. In this sense, emotions exist between people and not just within them (Denzin, 1984). In general, theories of emotions support the humanitarian

and caring aspect of leadership and are in contrast with rational and task-oriented theories (Denzin, 1984). Hargreaves (2001) found that:

The recurrent emotional experiences that people have in their respective occupations affect their identities and their relationships with clients in distinctive ways. Each occupation and its culture has different emotional expectations, contours, and effects on workers and their clients (Hargreaves, 2001:1057).

Headship is no exception. Researchers have found that there are relationships between successful leadership and understanding of emotions (Schmidt, 2000; McColl-Kennedy and Anderson, 2002).

According to Grossman (2000) heads who understand emotions motivate followers to work more effectively and efficiently. They use emotions, trying to inspire their followers concerning the school vision, and at the same time, engage them in developing new ideas (Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson, and Spangler, 1995; George, 2000). Beatty and Brew (2004) in a study with 53 graduate students who were doing a Masters degree in Educational Leadership, found that emotions were a critical element for leaders in their social relations within schools. In the same study there was also evidence of the connection between shared emotional meaning-making and trust in relationships. Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001) in a study with teachers who had brought changes into their classrooms, found that the changes required immense amounts of emotional work. Teachers had to work through complex and sometimes difficult relationships with their colleagues.

Emotional work is closely related to the capacity of leaders to form positive relationships with their staff (Hargreaves et al., 2001). Such relationships seem to have powerful effects on leadership in many ways. For example, a head teachers'

ability to handle conflict and feelings of frustration and to create feelings of optimism are vital in times of change. Loader (1997) who studied the inner emotional lives of leaders suggests that a part of their job is to acknowledge and share with their staff their own emotional responses to their work.

An important aspect of leader's emotional work is empathy. Leading with empathy appears to enhance the perceptions of leader's integrity and raise co-operation and trust (George, 2000; Lewis, 2000).

Another important aspect of leader's emotional work is caring (Nias, Southworth and Yeomans, 1989; Nias, 1999; Beatty and Brew, 2004; Day, 2004; Noddings, 2006).

Although most of the theories about caring are related to teacher and students relationships, these relationships may be extended to headship relationships. Coombe (1999) sees caring 'as a genuine commitment to the well-being of others' (p. 95). Noddings (1992) points out that caring requires leaders to elicit and listen to how students and teachers are feeling, to evaluate their purposes, to help them engage in self-evaluation, and to assist them grow as participants in a caring relations. Further, she (Noddings, 2006) explains that caring leaders can ask probing questions, lead discussions and serve as models of critical thinking. Based on those definitions, it could be argued that the notion of caring can include qualities of trust, respect, healthy relationships and understanding.

Within an environment of caring, successful head teachers show love and compassion for students' lives and achievements as well as love and compassion for teacher's lives and professional development (Nias et al., 1989). In general, they care for the



well being of the whole community. Researchers have found that caring is strongly present in schools in challenging circumstances where successful heads are sensitive to students and teachers' needs and priorities (Day, 2005b). Qualities of generosity, patience and the willingness to help are also important parts of their work. In successful schools the views and opinions of all participants (stakeholders) are recognised and respected by their colleagues (Coombe, 1999; Evans, 2000). Head teachers in these environments of caring not only listen to their staff and students needs, they also either satisfy them or explain why the needs cannot be met (Noddings, 2001). Noddings (1992) emphasises the point that schools should be defined as centres of care and those themes of care should permeate every aspect of school life, from relationships and organisation to curriculum and teaching. This helps people in schools to trust others as the possibilities of conflicts are reduced (Evans, 2000).

Fundamentally, successful heads leadership is an emotional practice which develops healthy relationships with students, staff, parents and stakeholders, builds understanding and a high level of communication with them and creates a learning and caring community.

In this section, I have discussed the important role of emotions in successful leadership practices and particularly how its aspects set the conditions for a healthy school environment in which teachers, students and parents learn together according to their needs. The notion of emotional work, therefore, is an essential quality of successful heads in leading their schools and in building moral practice. In the next section, I will explore what research reports about the role of personal and

professional values of head teachers in their leadership practices and the way that they direct people to achieve school goals.

### **3.4.2 Moral leadership**

A growing body of literature suggests that values - as well as emotions - have a central role in leadership in complex organizations (Morrison, 2002) as they (values) help leaders to develop the conditions for learning and transformation. This suggests that heads are driven by a set of individual value systems which drive leadership practice (Day et al., 2000; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Lazaridou, 2007).

Values, morals and ethics are the very stuff of leadership and administrative life. (Hodginson, 1991:11).

Greenfield (1986) considers leaders as 'value carriers' (p.69); and Sergiovanni (1999) claims that the moral dimension of leadership embraces developing attitudes and dispositions within the learning community that undergird democratic practices, such as equity and fairness. The role of 'moral' leaders, then, is to develop moral connections with their staff which are stronger than extrinsic or intrinsic rewards (Sergiovanni, 2000).

The moral perspective of leadership is associated with the findings of successful leadership. For example, Day et al. (2000) propose that the successful leadership perspective 'focuses on the moral values and value-laden activities of leaders and how these are disclosed to other colleagues' (p. 161). Furthermore, Gold et al. (2003), in a study with ten outstanding heads in England, found that 'they were driven by a different set of values and these ... were based on intrinsic values and not those imposed by others, including government' (Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin and

Collarbone, 2003:136). Similarly, Campbell, Gold and Lunt (2003), in a small scale study, found that school leaders were able to maintain and articulate their values and to influence their relationships with their staff. Lazaridou (2007) in a study with ten highly effective leaders in Canada, also concluded that they referred to their moral values and ethical principals during their leadership. It seems, then, that heads, therefore, who are practising successful leadership in times of change, are informed by and communicated their personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school.

Implicit to the idea of a moral dimension of leadership is servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) which emphasizes 'increased services to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community and the sharing of power in decision taking' (Spears, 1998:3). Successful servant heads, according to Sergiovanni (2000), develop an environment of trust, openness and learning. They are deeply committed to the growth of each individual on personal, professional and spiritual level. These key characteristics of servant leaders are also closely related to the findings of successful leadership research. The leadership succession research indicates that successful heads follow a person-centred approach in leadership; they develop an environment of trust and respect and care about the personal and professional development of each individual in school and the development of students learning (Leithwood et al., 2006). April, Macdonald, and Vriesendorp (2000), identify servant leadership in complex organizations as developing a sense of community in schools and promoting shared decision making.

In Cyprus the Educational System, conceptualizes the role of head teachers as having more managerial rather than leadership duties by trying to reduce the involvement of personal values and emotions (Theophilides, 1994; MOEC, 1997). The large number of rules and regulations set the working conditions for heads, teachers and students. Those conditions seek to impose an objective and rational view of headship. However, heads have everyday contact with people in their schools; discuss people's problems, worries, exchange ideas and in general interact with each other. This aspect of school life shows that head teachers involve their values in schools life. The regulations for a value-free school, therefore, are difficult to put into practice. It has been important, for this research, to explore how successful heads find balance between the centralized system and their values.

In this section, I have argued that successful head teachers are driven by their personal values which they clearly communicate with teachers, students and stakeholders in order to develop healthy relationships, to articulate their vision and to build the feelings of trust and respect among people. In the next section, I will discuss what research has discovered about distributed leadership.

### 3.4.3 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership has become a central theme in successful leadership discussions (Harris, 2004, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Spillane, 2006; Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, Yashkina, 2007) and it has been claimed to be closely connected to their leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Distributed leadership is a concept that is based on theoretical<sup>1</sup> exploration (Gronn, 2000) and it finds support among writers in the last decade. These writers use a variety of terms to describe how the authority of leading is not located in the person of the head, but it is distributed among people (teachers, students, parents etc). The term of distributed leadership seem to overlap with others in the literature like: shared leadership (Fullan, 1991), invitational leadership (Stoll and Fink, 1995) and teacher leadership (Lieberman, 1988; Little, 2003). Distributed leadership is a form of collective agency, incorporating the activities of many individuals in a school, who work at mobilizing and guiding other teachers in the process of instructional change (Spillane et al., 2001:25). Leithwood et al. (2006) claim<sup>2</sup> that ‘school leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed’ (p. 12). While empirical studies of distributed leadership are limited, related research evidence showed that some patterns of distributed leadership might exist in successful head teachers schools (Day and Leithwood, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> The empirical evidence that is discussed in this section emerged from the related fields of school improvement and teacher leadership.

<sup>2</sup> Although Leithwood et al. (2006) believe that this claim is not as ‘strong’ as the other six claims which concern successful leadership.

Distributed leadership does not equate with delegated leadership which is based on heads' control and teachers' compliance. Gronn (2003) explains that delegated and distributed leadership influence school leadership, but in a different way:

The effect of delegation is to create a range of formal and informal working arrangements which may or may not entail democratic power-sharing and opportunities for dispersed or shared leadership, and which are intended at least partly to compensate for role intensification (Gronn 2003:68).

Distributed leadership provides a contrast to hierarchical ideas about leadership. It is a concept that is value-based and suggests the propagation of more democratic values in schools (Woods, 2005). The distributed perspective of leadership demands de-centring 'the' leadership (Gronn, 2000), giving more responsibilities to staff. As Bennett et al. (2003) note "distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual to 'others'... rather it is emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise" (Bennett, Harvey, Wise, and Woods, 2003:3). In other words, distributed leadership in its pure form allows teachers to work together and gives them a legitimate source of authority (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2006). However, distributed leadership could not be interpreted as an effort to become headship less demanding. Leithwood et al. (2007) in a small study with eight primary and secondary schools in Ontario found that distributing leadership produces great demands for head teachers: 'to coordinate who performs which leadership functions, to build leadership capacities to others, and to monitor the leadership work of those others, providing constructive feedback to them about their efforts' (Leithwood et al., 2007:63).

In the day-to-day practice of headship, there is a range in the degree of distribution of leadership among head teachers which relates to the diagnosis of context. For

example, a head at the beginning of his/her career might feel unsafe to distribute leadership. In this respect, delegation of responsibilities might be one of his/her strategies. Becoming more experienced and having a clearer picture of his/her priorities might result in more distribution as a way to increase ownership, commitment and loyalty to school goals.

Based on the formal declaration of the Ministry of Education in Cyprus, head teachers are the only persons in the school who are responsible for anything which happens in the school. The rules and regulations suggest that school head teachers are in charge and should delegate responsibilities to the staff at the school and especially to deputy heads (MOEC, 1997). In this sense, the distribution of leadership in Cypriot schools would seem to be a challenge, though, perhaps, not impossible for ‘successful’ heads.

### **3.5 Summary**

The Figure 3.1 below presents the leadership models I have discussed in this chapter, the relationships among them, and their relationships to the Cyprus context. On the one hand both learning-centred and transformational leadership models are linked to educational change. They include strategies that lead schools in reforming their cultures (e.g. promote teachers professional development, develop moral connections among people). On the other hand, transactional leadership is responsible for the maintenance of the status quo in a school. Its strategies are focused on the management of school structures and on implementing school purposes. The rational character of education system in Cyprus, the managerial responsibilities of head teachers, the big number of rules and regulations that heads have to follow for the right implementation of school purposes and the delegation of responsibilities from

heads to their staff link a part of Cyprus context to the transactional leadership model. On the contrary, the emphasis on learning, the involvement of heads personal values in headship processes and the use of emotions in their day-to-day practices is connected to the models of reforming school culture: learning-centred leadership and transformational leadership.

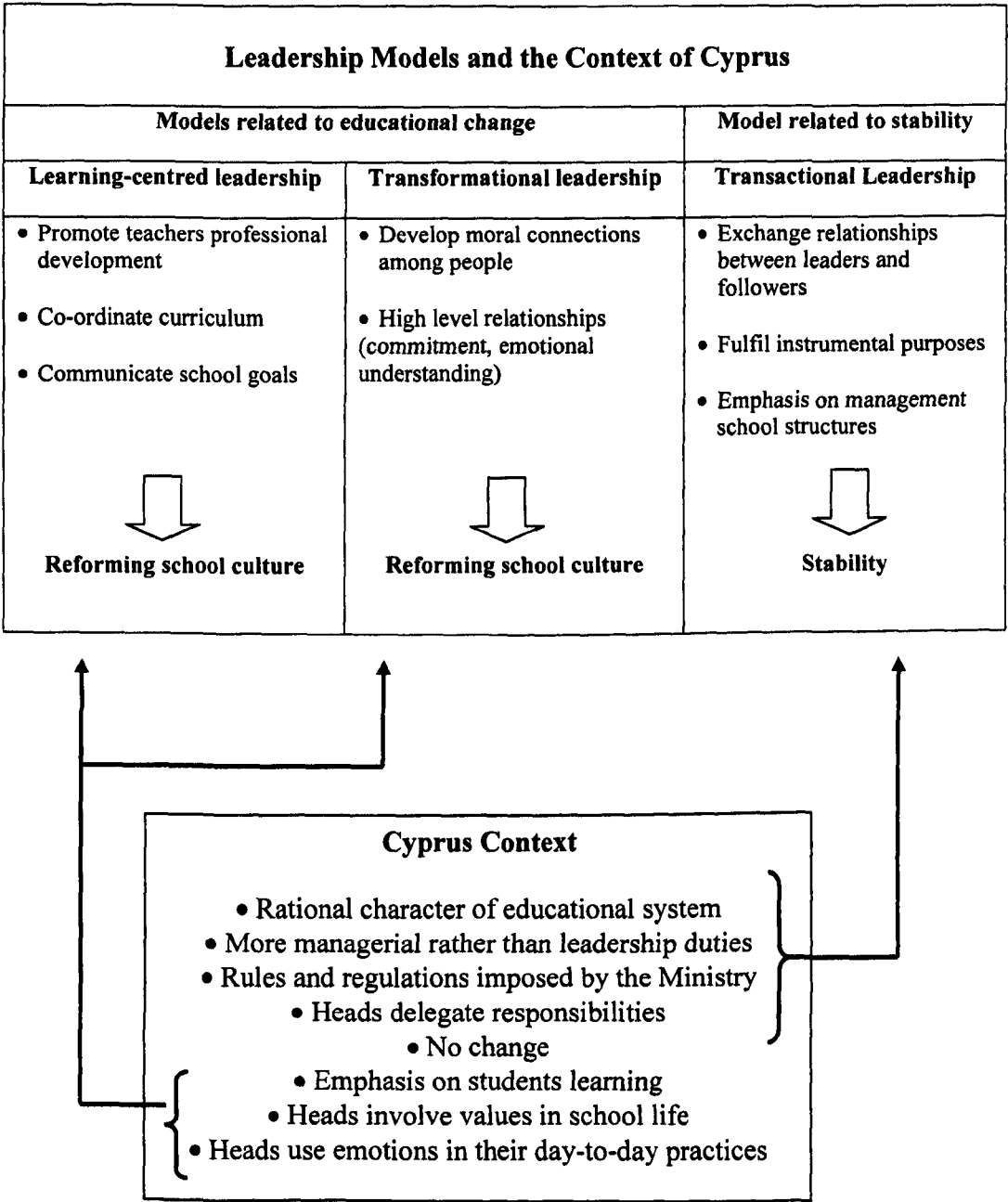


Figure 3.1: Leadership models and the context of Cyprus



### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the meaning of leadership and management. I have discussed three leadership models (learning-centred leadership, transactional leadership and transformational leadership) that heads adopt to inform their practices in order to achieve school goals. I also have presented qualities that heads' possess (emotional work, moral leadership, distributed leadership) and which are related to their personal set of values. These qualities enable them to create a moral framework in their work which should be in a balance with the educational context they work. Successful heads need to combine strategies from the various leadership models and qualities, according to the context they work (Leithwood and Riehl 2003), to cope with the new environmental challenges in order to serve school needs. Researching heads practices, values and qualities in the context of Cyprus is important, as those are influenced by national and school contexts in which they work.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapters I have outlined the conceptual framework which informs this piece of research (Chapters 1, 2, 3). Together with a review of existing literature on successful leadership values, skills, qualities, practices and a discussion of the influences of social context on headship practices, paying particular attention to the case of Cyprus (Chapters 1, 2, 3). I have also explored leadership as a complex, interactive and dynamic concept.

This chapter will focus upon the research design, processes and analysis. I first discuss the research paradigm that I adopted for the study of successful heads in the context of Cyprus. Then I analyze the term 'ethnography' and discuss how it was used in the context of this research. Before discussing the procedures that followed in selecting the sample of successful heads and the specific research tools used in this study-interviews, observation, and documentary analysis-, I describe the multi-perspective approach and the procedure of the data analysis. Finally, I discuss the criteria which were followed to ensure the quality of this research (trustworthiness) and conclude with ethical considerations.

## **4.2 Adopting a Paradigm**

The first consideration was which 'research paradigm' to adopt. A paradigm according to Patton (2002) is:

a world view - a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such, paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners telling them what is important, what is legitimate, what is reasonable. Paradigms are normative; they tell the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological considerations (Patton, 2002: 69).

The paradigm, according to this definition, consists of the basic beliefs (Lincoln, 1985a) and deeper reflections upon ontological and epistemological assumptions which guide the decision of researchers during inquiry. This decision involves the selection of appropriate methods to collect and analyze the data related to the phenomenon under study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) present two research paradigms: the positivist and the naturalistic paradigm. Central to the distinction between the two paradigms is the controversial relationship between theory and research (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998; Oakley, 2000). Others acknowledge the contribution of both paradigms to the development of the social research by using a combination of several data-collection techniques, which are both qualitative and quantitative (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Day, Sammons and Gu, 2008b).

The positivist paradigm is related to the scientific method of research (Bryman, 1988) where it is believed that social science inquiry should be value free. That is, time- and context-free generalizations (which) are desirable and possible. According to this paradigm, researchers should eliminate their biases, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study, and test or empirically justify their stated hypotheses (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Day et al., 2008b).

The naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) is related to the qualitative method(s) of research. The ontological position of the naturalistic paradigm claims that the real world is explained through multiple-constructed realities (this will be discussed in following section). Research is value-bound, it is impossible to differentiate causes and effects. Research meaning is closely connected to context, logic moves from specific to general (e.g. explanations are generated inductively from the data), and that knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry entails an ontology in which social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena 'out there' and separate from those involved in their construction. The epistemological position of the naturalistic paradigm considers that the task of the researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of everyday concepts, meanings and knowledge (Robson, 2002:27). Here the researcher enters the everyday social world of the 'subjects' in order to grasp the socially constructed meanings and then reconstructs these meanings in social scientific language (Blaikie, 1993).

The debate between the two paradigms has been characterized by some researchers as the 'paradigm war' (Anderson and Herr, 1999) or 'paradigms debate' (Patton, 2002) which led to 'the relentless focus on the differences between the two orientations' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:14). Since there is an obvious connection between quantitative methods and a positivist approach/paradigm, (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) as well as between qualitative methods and naturalistic approach/paradigm

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985) the selection of one of the two paradigms has an immediate effect on the methods used.

There are some considerations that are closely related to the research purposes which need to be taken into account before adopting a paradigm that will guide the research. First, since the purpose of this study is to define and understand the way successful primary heads lead schools in Cyprus, it is necessary to study the values, skills and qualities of successful heads as well as the strategies, the plans and the methods they use. A number of researchers have described headship leadership as a complex, rich and multidimensional phenomenon which needs the appropriate research design to capture its complexities (Marion and Uhl-Bien, 2001; Morrison, 2002, Day and Leithwood, 2007). In naturalistic approaches, the researcher has the chance to be in constant interaction with the setting in order to make sense of it and to understand how all the parts work together to form the whole. Thus, the naturalistic approach with qualitative research methods was chosen because it fitted the planned research.

A second consideration for using the naturalistic paradigm, which emphasizes the significant role of context in research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), was the focus of the study to understand and define headship leadership practices in the national context of Cyprus, and at the same time to explore the role of school context (internal and external) in their practices. The researcher in this paradigm 'elects to carry out research in the ... context of the entity for which study is proposed' (Patton, 2002:39) in order to explore the deeper meanings, to understand human behaviour, and to have an in depth understanding (Patton, 2002). In other words, researchers seek to describe the phenomenon under investigation in depth and detail, holistically and in context.

A third consideration for using the naturalistic paradigm, was that the purpose of this study is to open up the complexities of head teachers' roles by taking into account the perspectives of teachers, students and parents about their heads (Lincoln, 1985a). One of the founders of the naturalistic paradigm claims that knowledge, which emerged from adopting the 'multiple perspective approach', is protected by balancing multiple perspectives to constrain bias (Guba, 1985:91). Thus, for a better, in depth and holistic understanding of headship leadership, a multiple perspective approach is important and it would fit the planned research.

Another consideration in selecting the naturalistic paradigm was the degree of the researcher's involvement. In naturalistic research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. To fully understand the complexity of human behaviour and relationships the researcher must recognize, classify and honour their multiple perspectives, is capable of identifying, taking into account, coping with difficult and well hidden behaviours, and must be capable of understanding the emotional status of participants and act with sensitivity to their needs (Lincoln, 1985a). Therefore, it became increasingly important that, as the researcher, I had to be sensitive to the behaviour changes of the participants during their interactions (this issue will be discussed later in this chapter).

The quality of naturalistic research is judged according to certain criteria: trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln, 1985a). The study of successful leadership involves the perspectives of participants and such perspectives are subjective and can change from one context to another. The process of the research followed the certain

criteria (e.g. triangulation of methods, triangulation of perspectives) from the beginning in order to ensure the quality of the data.

In addition to the above considerations, the decision to follow a naturalistic paradigm was based on previous research that has been undertaken with the same concept. Specifically, I was influenced by the work of Day et al. (2000) who studied twelve successful heads in England. He and his colleagues used qualitative methods to investigate head teachers.

This study also sought to make a contribution to illuminate head teachers' practices in a range of factors (e.g. school context – internal and external-, school size and heads experience). Finally, it set out to identify some important insights into the policy of moving heads around schools.

#### **4.2.1 Defining Ethnography (research method)**

Since the purpose of the research was to investigate how head teachers were successful in primary schools in Cyprus and to identify the qualities, skills and values they possessed in different school sizes and different socioeconomic circumstances. The research method was that of ethnography in order to unfold the complexities of leadership that were discussed in the previous chapters. Adopting the ethnographic method of research helped me to examine leadership holistically, to study in depth the dynamic interaction of leadership features and to see through head teachers' practices, to develop a clearer picture of their day-to-day practices and to explain the complexities of head teachers' practices. Marion and Uhl-Bien, (2001) state that 'ethnography would permit analyses of complex interactions and behaviors' and

complexity 'cannot be accurately represented as a flowchart of unique and separable activities or groups'(p. 413).

Ethnography, for Hammersley (1990), refers to social research that has most of the following features:

1. People's behaviour is studied in everyday contexts, rather than under experimental conditions created by researcher.
2. Data are gathered from a *range* of sources, but observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones.
3. The approach to data collection is 'unstructured' in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning; nor are the categories used for interpreting what people say and do pre-given or fixed. This does not mean that the research is unsystematic; simply that initially the data are collected in as raw a form, and on as wide front, as feasible.
4. The focus is usually a single setting or group, of relatively small scale. In life history research the focus may even be a single individual.
5. The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most (Hammersley, 1990:1-2).

This definition underlines some important points for the development of this research.

First, as Hammersley notes, ethnography focuses on studying people's behaviour in context which means that it examines their lives and experiences in the contextual condition of a setting. This means that ethnography takes part in real lives of people and 'it also implies a commitment to a search for meaning ... and an orientation to discovery' (Ball, 1993:157). The important point that Hammersley stresses is that researchers make use of what people say in order to interpret their culture. Since, 'culture and leadership ... are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by itself', (Schein, 1985:2) the ethnographic approach provided me with the chance to identify, analyze and present the practices, skills, qualities, values and knowledge of successful headship leadership within the same national context.



Secondly, according to the above definition, ethnography not only includes observations of the behaviour of members of a particular setting, but also includes interviews and the collection of documents. Researchers collect their data systematically as 'a record of everything the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks' (Anderson, 1990:152). This means that ethnography would enable me to use a variety of data collection techniques and therefore, to deal with a wide variety of evidence. These additional techniques gave valuable scope for triangulation (Robson, 2002) (an issue that I will discuss later in this chapter). Third, ethnography focuses on a group of relatively small scale settings. For this reason, this research studied ten successful primary head teachers in urban area of Cyprus.

In this investigation of successful headship in the Cypriot context then, I adopted an ethnographic approach. This allowed me to study successful heads in action and to differentiate their skills, qualities, values, practices and knowledge both among the cases and with other cases at an international level.

#### **4.3 Adopting a Multiple Perspective Approach**

Seeking to enhance the trustworthiness of this research data, I used the 'multiple perspectives' approach to investigate successful headship leadership. This approach emerged from the theory of the naturalistic paradigm. Initially, it was named 'multiple realities' and it proposes that, in the real world 'there are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:37). The term 'multiple realities' has been replaced by some researchers with the term 'multiple perspectives' (MacBeath, 1998; Day et al., 2000; Patton, 2002) 'for the purposes of clarity and

greater precision' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:16) as multiple realities is a term with wider meaning. Lincoln (1985b) claims that 'the concept of perspective may be more useful, as it implies multiple views of the same phenomenon, multiple foci that may be brought to bear, and multiple realities that are constructed of the same phenomenon' (Lincoln, 1985b:36). The multiple perspective approach, therefore, leads researchers to have a holistic idea of the phenomenon being studied and it 'attempts to use the difference among competing perspectives as a means of constructing new modes of understanding' (Morgan, 1983:379).

Nevertheless, Lincoln (1985a) argues that, even when researchers gather all the perspectives of a phenomenon, the understanding is still partial: 'no single viewpoint-even a discipline-provides more than a partial picture. Efforts to understand reality cannot be more than partial-and even the aggregate of all perspectives cannot yield a total picture' (Lincoln, 1985a:87). Therefore, the efforts of implementing a multiple perspective approach, allow researchers to create the best possible understanding of the real world.

By adopting a multiple perspective approach my intention was to open up the complexities of head teachers' roles in order to develop a better understanding of the quality of their practices in different school contexts. Consequently, I considered head teachers from different angles, which according to Patton (2002) encourages dialogue among perspectives rather than aiming at establishing a singular truth and linear prediction.

As mentioned earlier, the participants were people who had everyday contact with heads, either at the decision making level or at the teaching level or in day-to-day life in school. Previous research has only rarely considered their perspectives about heads work (Loader, 1997; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998). They could be called the ‘hidden voices’ (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 1999) of schools. In this study, these ‘hidden voices’ had the opportunity to describe their experiences working with successful heads and to explain, from their point of view, the most important qualities, skills, practices and values of successful heads. Consequently, aiming to make sense of headship leadership in Cyprus, I adopted the multiple perspective approach. Gathering the perspectives of heads, deputy heads, teachers, parents and students at each school helped me to construct the best possible understanding of successful leadership.

#### **4.4 Establishing the Sample: Selection of ‘Successful’ Head Teachers**

So far I have discussed the rationale and the methodology that I adopted in order to investigate successful headships in primary schools in Cyprus, in order to attempt to answer the following questions: ‘How is success defined in Cyprus?’ and ‘Which successful head teachers should be selected in order to answer the research questions and satisfy the research purpose?’

The sampling of cases is an important part of research as it is the main source for providing information (Robson, 1993). The head teachers in this study were selected by using purposive sampling. This provided me with the opportunity to select information-rich cases for study in depth and to capture the heterogeneity in the population of successful primary heads in urban schools of Cyprus (Patton, 2002). Silverman (2000) underlines that:

Purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some features of processes in which we were interested. However this does not provide a simple approval to any case we happen to choose. Rather purposive sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample case carefully on this basis (Silverman, 2000:104).

As I argued earlier, the most important criterion in the selection of schools is that they should be led by successful head teachers. For this reason, I gathered information about the 'successfulness' of heads from ten school inspectors. I interviewed each of the inspectors to understand 'how they define successful head in the Cyprus Educational System' and 'what their criteria are for success'. Each of them, based on their definition about the 'successful head', was asked to suggest two or three successful head teachers in schools in urban areas (this study focused on only head teachers from an urban area with an aim to limiting the variety of schools making the cases more comparable). After the completion of these interviews a list of around thirty successful heads was formed.

Putting together inspectors' interviews and ideas it was emerged a holistic definition for successful heads. All the interviews reported the importance and contribution of successful head teachers in the maintenance of good relations between teachers, parents and the MOEC. From their perspective, head teachers were important and significant figures in determining the smooth operation of schools. They also emphasized personal traits and behaviours of successful heads (e.g. efficient, dynamic, excellent teacher, excellent manager, cold-blooded). According to inspectors views the successful heads were described as heroes. Successful heads expected to have all the solutions to school problems, to be on the right place the right time, to be multi-skilled and to be expert on all the subjects that were related to school

curriculum. Further, they were anticipated to develop mainly centralized practices and to delegate their power. Some inspectors (3/10) however, had a more comprehensive view of success which emerged for their experience as heads. This group of inspectors valued the team work and they placed great emphasis on school administrative team [head teacher and deputy head (s)]. Due to this fact they expected heads to work in collaboration with the administrative team in order to achieve school goals. In general, inspectors saw head teachers more as good managers and transactional leaders than they were conceived as carriers of change and innovators.

Based on the list that was formed from inspectors’ interviews, I chose the heads I would include in the research sample. This decision was strictly based on the research goals. The question that emerged then was: ‘Which of those cases best serve the research goals?’ The selection of the sample of successful head teachers from the list was made according to a number of criteria. These criteria were in a hierarchical form, starting from the most important criterion and ending with the least important criterion for this research:

1. Schools of different sizes: the schools were categorized as large, medium and small according to the number of students (see Table 4.1: Schools size).

Schools size			
	Small schools	Medium Schools	Large schools
Number of students	Up to 149	150-249	Over 250

Table 4.1: Schools size

2. Schools located in a range of socioeconomic settings: the schools are characterized high, middle and low socioeconomic status (SES) according to their location. Following the educational policy in Cyprus, students must attend the school in their neighbourhood. Thus, there is a relationship between the schools location and the SES of the parents. In this study the schools in the poor areas of town consist of old houses, refugees' neighbourhoods, immigrants' neighbourhoods - considered as low SES schools; the schools in the rich areas of the town consist of big houses, expensive cars- considered as high SES and the rest of the schools were considered as middle SES schools.
3. Different phases of head teachers career: a head teachers' career in Cyprus is not the same as it is described in research that has been developed in Western countries (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996; Reeves et al., 1997) because they are not career heads. Their position is a result of promotion from teaching and deputy head positions. Teachers in Cyprus become heads after 25-30 years of teaching experience. In this study head teachers with 1-4 years of experience in the position of head were considered as new and those head teachers with 5-8 years of experience were considered as experienced.

With this in mind, the next important decision for this research was the size of the sample. According to some authors (Robson, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002) qualitative researchers usually deal with small samples in order to study them in depth. There is no rule, they argue, to help researchers decide the size of their sample:

Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources (Patton, 2002: 244).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize that:

In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus redundancy is the primary criterion (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:202).

Based on these issues of sample size selection and having in mind the development of a sufficient and in depth understanding of all the purposes this research, the selection of the sample schools is illustrated in Table 4.2 below:

PROFILES OF CASES					
School case number	Students number on roll (and age range)	School size	SES	Gender of head teacher (and years of service as a teacher)	Years as head teachers at present school (total years in headship)
1.	234 (9-11)	Medium	High	Female (31)	2 (4)
2.	287 (6-11)	Large	Middle	Female (33)	3 (5)
3.	146 (6-8)	Small	Low	Female (34)	6 (6)
4.	161 (6-8) <sup>1</sup>	Small	Middle	Male (31)	2 (4)
5.	272 (9-11)	Large	Low	Male (39)	5 (7)
6.	214 (9-11)	Medium	High	Female (31)	2 (4)
7.	141 (6-8)	Small	Middle	Male (30)	2 (4)
8.	329 (6-11)	Large	Middle	Male (30)	2 (4)
9.	183 (6-8)	Medium	High	Female (30)	3 (5)
10.	296 (6-8)	Large	Middle	Male (31)	2 (5)

Table 4.2: Profiles of cases

Since I was interested in understanding in-depth successful headship in urban primary schools in Cyprus, the selection of the sample focused on the richness of information of the cases, rather than on the representativeness of the sample.

<sup>1</sup> The head teacher of this case after the first interview with him decided to not to continue.

After the first personal contact with the 'successful heads' and my proposal to be a part of the research, their reactions were both positive and negative. Three out of ten of the proposed heads denied cooperating with me because they saw me as a threat, as an additional barrier to their work. After that the list of 'successful heads' was modified (make a list of 10 heads) again based on the research criteria. My status for those 'successful heads', as a teacher, was a positive quality. This status opened doors to cooperate with 'successful heads' in order to study them. Eight (8/10) 'successful heads' answered positively immediately and two (2/10) of them asked their staff if they wanted to be part of this study before they also gave a positive answer. Generally, heads and teachers agreed to help me as a sign of professional solidarity. For the teachers I was a colleague, I was one of them. They felt comfortable having discussions with me. They also knew that we shared the same experiences in schools, so it was easier to trust me and speak to me about their experiences.

#### **4.5 Research Tools**

I employed multiple sources of data collection. By using different types of data I was able to cross check the findings in order to increasing the trustworthiness of the research (I will discuss trustworthiness in detail in the following section of this chapter). I used the following research techniques:

- a. Interviews (one-to-one interviews and group interviews)
- b. Observation
- c. Documentation



#### **4.5.1 Developing interviews**

The interview is a methodological tool which is used by qualitative researchers for data collection (Robson, 1993; Fontana and Frey, 2000). Its main purpose is to obtain a special kind of information (Merriam, 1988, Kvale, 1996), to enter into the other person's perspective (Patton, 2002) and to understand how people interpret the world around them (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Interviews provide researchers with the kind of information that they cannot observe. Patton (2002) verifies this argument by pointing out that:

The fact is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world (Patton, 2002:341).

The selection of interviews, as one of the research tools for this research, provided me with the opportunity to study the unobservable aspects of primary school head teachers' work. Through questions I tried to understand the way other people think.

A major limitation of interview data includes possibly distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview. Interview data is also subject to recall error, reactivity (changes in behaviour) of the interviewee to the interviewer and self-serving responses (Patton, 2002: 306). These limitations were overcome by using a multi-perspective approach (the multi-perspective approach discussed earlier in this chapter) and by triangulating participants' answers (triangulation will be discussed later in this chapter). The interview questions were designed to be under common themes for all the participants

and therefore, their answers were triangulated (see Appendix A). The multi-perspective approach that was used in this research, (the multi-perspective approach discussed earlier in this chapter) was helpful to overcome this limitation. The questions of the interviews were designed to be under common themes for all the participants, therefore their answers were triangulated (see Appendix A).

Interviews vary according to their structure. Among them is the semi-structured interview, which I used during the study. This strategy offers to the interviewer flexibility to decide when it is appropriate to explore certain topics in greater depth or to ask questions which were not originally scheduled (Robson, 1993; Patton, 2002). Thus, interviews were a useful tool that helped me to gather in depth information about heads' features, practices, values, beliefs and careers. My intention was to interview people from different positions (see Table 4.3: Interview participants) in order to have rich and in-depth multiple perspective information about the main themes of the study. For this reason, in each school of the sample, I interviewed:

- the head teacher (one-to-one interview)
- a deputy (one-to-one interview)
- two teachers (one-to-one interview)
- two parents (one-to-one interview)
- four-five students (group interviews)

#### 4.5.1.1 Interview phases

The interviewing was accomplished in two phases. During the first phase of interviewing, which was prior to the observations, the sample of heads was interviewed about the main themes of leadership and management. The second phase of interviewing was scheduled sometime after observation. I spent two days at each school interviewing teachers, students, parents as well as the head teachers. The purpose of the second interview with the heads, was to clarify some questions that were raised during the observations and some follow up questions related to the first interview (see Appendix A). The information that was obtained from those interviews was also used for triangulation purposes. Specific data items were verified with other respondents (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Interview Participants															
	Deputy head			Teacher 1			Teacher 2			Parent 1		Parent 2		Students	
	Yrs of experience	Yrs exp. at school	Yrs of exp. with this head	Yrs of experience	Yrs exp. at this school	Yrs of exp. with this head	Yrs of experience	Yrs exp. at this school	Yrs of exp. with this head	Number of children		Number of children	Yrs of exp	Number of students	Age
Case1	1	1	1	9	3	2	9	4	2	1	2	1	2	4	9
Case 2	2	2	2	9	3	3	13	3	3	1	3	2	3	8	12
Case 3	5	3	3	10	6	6	12	3	3	2	4	1	2	4	8
Case 5	-	-	-	12	5	5	14	4	4	2	6	2	12	4	9
Case 6	2	2	2	14	2	3	9	2	2	1	3	1	2	4	10
Case 7	2	2	2	15	1	1	9	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	8
Case 8	4	2	2	15	2	2	12	3	2	1	2	1	3	4	9
Case 9	2	1	1	8	3	3	6	2	2	2	4	-	-	4	8
Case 10	5	4	2	16	3	2	13	2	2	1	1	1	2	5	8

Table 4.3: Interview participants

#### **4.5.1.2 The structure of the interview questions**

The formation of interviews was determined in light of the literature review on leadership and management. As a first step in developing the questions for the interviews, I made a list of the main themes that have emerged from the literature which served the research questions and I considered them (themes) as important, e.g. values, vision, context, processes of decision taking, relationships, staff/self development. Each of the themes was analyzed into sub themes. After that I developed a guideline for questions which were related to each group of participants (see Appendix A). For example, questions about the theme 'relationships' were formulated differently for heads and for students. I always had in mind that this research included people from different educational background (head-teachers-parents) and people from different age groups (e.g. head teachers - students) which was an important factor in the questions configuration. However, there were many questions which were the same for all participants for triangulation reasons. Of course, the interview questions were transformed and improved due to each school context and due to the emergent design of the study. All the interviews were tape recorded. At the end of each interview I took fieldwork notes about my impressions related to the school climate.

Regarding students interviews<sup>2</sup> I followed 'focus group interviews' (Patton, 2002), in the sense that in all cases I developed group discussions with students (see Appendix

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<sup>2</sup> The questions for students' interviews were checked by the bureaucrats of Ministry of Education (MOEC) before starting the research, in order to make sure that the themes of the questions were appropriate for students. In addition, prior to student interviews I asked permission from the parents of students in order to allow them participate in interviews. I asked this permission by sending a letter to parents where I explained the aim of the research, the procedure of interviews and the ethical considerations of the study.

A). The aim behind the selection of this technique was that the students who participated in the group interviews would feel more comfortable, could talk about their head teachers and generally, they could enjoy the discussion with their friends (Patton, 2002). These groups consisted of three to five communicative students and they were recommended by their teachers.

Special attention was given to questions used for the children's interviews which were designed in such a way as to be appropriate to their cognitive and emotional development. The first part of the discussion was an effort to understand how students perceived the meaning of 'leadership' in their language and behaviour (Armstrong and Galloway, 1996).

The second part of the discussion with students included the same interview agenda for head teachers, deputy heads, teachers and parents in a simpler form:

- (a) by sending a letter to the participants in advance of the interview informing them about the purpose of the interview, the main themes of it, their right to refuse to answer any question that they do not feel comfortable with and the way the responses will be handled, including confidentiality (see Appendix B).
- (b) at the beginning of the interview I repeated the above information
- (c) I ended the interview by thanking the interviewee(s).

#### **4.5.1.3 The role of the researcher**

It is clear from the discussion above that interviewing was a big part of this study. I spent between two and three days at each school interviewing people. My lack of previous interview practice and experience was one of the limitations of this study.

Despite the fact, that I had studied a lot about interviewing people the reality of fieldwork was different. During the first interview I mismanaged the interview time and I had the feeling that I did not ask the necessary questions. After the first interview I felt more confident, I managed the interview time better by directing interviewees and changing the theme of discussion where it was necessary. While I was continually improving my interview skills, I also improved the quality of the questions by identifying their weak points and transforming them. I was in a better position to discuss in more depth the emergent themes.

During the interviews the interviewees - heads, staff and parents – were not sure about their answers. My role was to support and encourage them. I was constantly reassuring them that the interview was proceeding well. Almost all the interviewees felt insecure, they thought that they gave the wrong answers to the interview questions. I kept encouraging them by saying ‘you are doing very well’, ‘do not worry, the interview is developing very well’, ‘there is not only one answer to the questions, just describe your experience’, ‘you are a very important component in the development of this research’. The directly opposite picture was coming from students’ interviews. After my introduction and the necessary explanations, they seemed to be very comfortable, happy and ready to answer my questions. At the conclusion of the interviews with the head teachers, they were grateful for the opportunity to reflect on their professional lives and careers.

Up to this point the role of interviews in the study, as a research tool, has been discussed. In the next section I will discuss the second research tool that has been used for the purposes of this study which is observation.

#### **4.5.2 Observations**

After the first phase of interviews with successful heads, observations of the same heads took place. I decided to include direct observation in this study because ‘certain research questions can best be answered by observing how people act or how things look’ (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003:450). I preferred as a researcher to have a personal view of the cases, according to the suggestions of Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) ‘if you want to know what they (informants) do ... there is no substitute for watching them’ (p. 450). Observation allows researchers to have first hand experience, to understand the way a particular school works, to design the follow up activity (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995) and have the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview. Understanding the realities within which people interact is essential to having a holistic perception of the case.

As researchers emphasize, the most important contemporary use of observation is usually non-participant or on looker observer because it is particularly difficult for a researcher to be a child or a head (Spindler and Spindler, 1992; Rossman and Rallis, 1998). I chose the role of observer-as-non participant because my main purpose was to investigate (watch) heads’ behaviours, actions and decisions. The observer-as-non participant role is considered an acceptable compromise, allowing the researcher to be in the place of action, to interact with informants; the researcher remains a researcher, and does not cross the line into friendship (Adler and Adler, 2000).

Despite the advantages that a study gains from an observational design the researcher should be aware of its limitations. First, the presence of an observer can have

considerable effect on the behaviour of those being observed in unknown ways. Participants may behave in an atypical fashion when they know they are being observed, and the selective perception of the observer may distort the data and hence the outcomes of a study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). Second, observation is also limited in focusing only on external behaviour-the observer cannot see what is happening inside people (Patton, 2002). And third, there is also the possibility that certain characteristics, prejudices or ideas of observers may bias what they 'see'. Robson (1993) states that '*our interests, experience and expectations* all affect what we attend to' (p. 202, original emphasis). To overcome those limitations researchers need other data sources to find out the extent to which observed activities are typical or atypical. This is one of the reasons that I decided to use triangulation of methods, to contrast the observational data with interviews and documentation.

#### **4.5.2.1 The researcher's role**

During observation, I focused my attention on heads' activities and behaviour (worldview, opinions, values, attitudes and symbolic constructs). This method of observation helped me to configure a picture of their leadership practices, to understand and penetrate in depth the complexities of leadership and to capture the details of it. I followed the head teachers during two working days (shadowing) everywhere they went. I started shadowing as soon as they arrived at school (7.15-7.25 in the morning) and stopped it at 13.45 (classes concluded at 13.05). I also observed a teachers' meeting in each of the cases. The field notes were very descriptive. At the beginning of each case I developed a short description of the setting. Then all the pages were dated and after that I divided each page into two parts. On the left side of the paper I recorded the actions of the head every five



minutes. I wrote terms, words and symbols that reminded me later of the whole action. I also wrote what head teachers did, what they discussed with other people, who they meet and where they went. At the end of each day I completed those field notes by writing on the right hand side of the paper, more detailed and concrete field notes by including my reactions to the experience, and reflections about the personal meaning of what has been observed (see Table 4.8: Observation sheet).

This process gave me the opportunity to observe and understand heads' interactions (with deputies, teachers, parents, students, staff, stakeholders and local authorities), their way of decision making, the staff meetings, their teaching abilities, their everyday relationships in schools, and generally, their way of leadership. Further, I noted the school climate and the emotions of people in the school environment as long as the time allowed me. Moreover, the research data collected during the observations was used to validate or strengthen the messages obtained in the interviews (Robson, 1993).

Observation – shadowing – as interviewing was also a new experience for me. Although my intention was just to observe, listen and follow the 'successful heads' without disturbing their work, my role changed after the 'ice breaking' time. They wanted to share with me their experiences, thoughts and worries. Some of them entrusted me a number of their trade secrets. Although they knew that I was a teacher they seemed to acknowledge my studies in leadership and they regularly asked me questions.

Shadowing was an unknown experience for all of the heads in the sample, also, so at the beginning of each observation they felt uncomfortable. After the first minutes of observation, they did not worry about my presence in their office or amongst them. Parents or school visitors did not know my role and most of the time the heads explained to them my role. Whenever they had some free time or during their movement from one place to another, they explained to me in detail about their phone calls, the discussions that had taken place or the special incidents which happened in their school. I listened to them without taking notes. I always had in mind, not to disturb them by writing a lot of notes. I just put a short phrase or a code into my field notes soon afterwards. I returned to my notes when heads were teaching. In addition, I completed some information as soon as I left the school, in my car, and the rest of my notes the same afternoon at home.

At the end of a shadowing session all the 'successful heads' were grateful for being present at their school. Almost all of them asked me to continue shadowing them, because they found a fellow to discuss with; they had a fellow in their daily loneliness. For example:

*Why don't you stay more days in our school to be my shadow? You are a good company to discuss with and to share my thinking (Head, School 8).*

*I got used to your company; it was nice to discuss with you because I am always in my own. Why don't you stay more days in our school? (Head, School 6)*

In this section I have discussed observation as a research tool which helped me in investigating the values, skills, qualities, practices and knowledge of successful heads in the school contexts of Cyprus. In the following section I will discuss the third research tool - documentation.

Observation Sheet			
Case number:		Date:	Day of shadowing 1 2 Page 1
Time	Observation	Reflection	
7.15			
.20			
.25			

Table 4.4: Observation sheet

### 4.5.3 Documentation

A way of data collection for this research is the study of documentation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). The term ‘document’ is used to indicate any written or recorded material which includes letters, diaries, speeches, photographs and meeting records. The advantages for a researcher who uses documentation according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) are the following: First, documents are ‘rich’ sources of information, contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent. Second, they are ‘stable’ sources of information, both in the sense that they may accurately reflect situations and they can be analyzed and without undergoing changes. Third, they are ‘legally unassailable’ representing formal statements that satisfy some accountability requirements.

I selected documentation as an additional source of information about successful heads - plus observation and interviews - because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perception of the research goals. The documents might be incomplete, inaccurate or some of the schools might not keep records about what they are doing. In this particular case documentation will not make sense without the interviews and observations.

During my fieldwork I collected any available formal written material that was related to heads and teachers planning, goals or aspirations, letters to parents and some significant letters to the MOEC.

Generally, the data consisted of 54 one-to-one interviews, nine group interviews and field notes of my own experiences and reflections. Head teachers interviews lasted approximately one and a half hour. Deputy head teachers and teachers interviews lasted 40 to 50 minutes and the interviews with parents and children approximately half an hour. All the interviews were recorded on audio-tapes and then were transcribed in detail. Transcriptions of heads interviews were returned to them to be checked for accuracy, and to have comments and/or supplementary information added. In addition to this, the data also consisted of heads' shadowing field notes and of a number of school documents. The great volume and the different kinds of data collected needed to be organized and analysed. The analysis of the data will be discussed after the presentation of how I piloted the study.

#### **4.6 Piloting the Study**

I conducted a pilot study before the development of the main study, in all primary schools of the sample. By piloting the interview schedule I had the chance to ensure that the interview as a whole functioned well. I identified questions which made interviewees repeat information or talk about a theme that was not in research purposes. Further, I changed the order of some themes questions in order for participant to be able to move more easily from one theme to the next. In addition, piloting the interview schedule provided me with some experience of using it and infused me with a greater sense of confidence.

#### **4.7 Analysing the Data**

The research data sought procedures and strategies of analysis to sustain and designate their richness and dynamism. At the same time they (the strategies) helped the researcher to understand the data better. In this study, I applied a synthesis of strategies in order to analyze the ethnographic data. The decision for the selection of an appropriate strategy for data analysis was based on which of the existing strategies could provide the best services to the needs of this research. Moreover, this strategy had to be in agreement with the philosophical background of this research (naturalistic paradigm).

Although the data analysis was a complex and messy process, in this chapter it will be presented in a structured form in order to be clear and understandable. The process of analysis was undertaken according to three phases: first, an analysis of data during the fieldwork, second, a within case analysis according to which, the 'cases' were

analyzed separately and third, a cross case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the above phases in detail. The Table 4.5 shows the time schedule that was followed during the collection and analysis of the data.

<b>Timetable of collecting and analyzing data</b>	
<b>Techniques of fieldwork</b>	<b>Period of time</b>
Interviews: Inspectors	Jun 05 – July 05
Interviews: Head teachers	15 Oct 05 – 8 Dec 05
Interviews: Teachers, Children, Parents	22 Nov 05 – 20 Jan 06
Observation	18 Nov 05 – 15 Dec 05
Documentation	18 Nov 05 – 15 Dec 05
Transcribed Interviews	20 Oct 05 – 25 Jan 06
Create role-ordered matrices	1 Feb 06 – 30 Mar 06
Case Reports	1 Apr 06 – 30 Sept 06
Cross Case Analysis report	15 Oct 06 – 15 Mar 07

Table 4.5: Timetable of collecting and analyzing data

Data collection<sup>3</sup> and analysis were two parallel processes that had a mutual influence (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) (first phase of analysis); therefore, there was no direct line to separate them (Patton, 2002). The ongoing analysis of the data provided the relevant information to guide the subsequent phase of data gathering (Miles and

<sup>3</sup> It is important to mention at this point of the discussion that before starting the data collection I asked permission from the MOEC in order to have access to primary schools (see letter in Appendix C).

Huberman, 1994). During the data collection, I focused my attention on certain information that was related either to the literature review or to the research questions. As the data collection proceeded, patterns were shaped and possible patterns emerged (Stake, 1995). By focusing on those patterns I had the opportunity to collect as much information as I could and entered deeper in the pattern. Getting deeper and deeper insights into a pattern, led me to gather rich and 'thick data' (Geertz, 1973).

In essence, when the data collection formally ended, it was time to begin the second phase of analysis. The qualitative research literature suggests that the researcher has two primary sources to draw from in organizing the analysis (Patton, 2002):

1. the questions that were generated during the conceptual and design phases of the study prior the fieldwork, and
2. analytic insights and interpretations that emerged during data collection (Patton, 2002: 437).

Having Patton statements in mind, I proceeded to the within-case analysis of the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The purpose of this second phase was to organize the data from each single case by displaying the summaries of the raw data and the patterns together (Miles and Huberman, 1994). While I read each case several times, I was searching for meaning by searching for patterns. Trying to make sense of the data, I was exploring to find patterns that appeared in the data again and again. For more important and accurate patterns, I was moving across all the raw data of each case. The aim was to triangulate the patterns across data sources (e.g. interviews of heads, teachers and students) and across methods (e.g. data from interviews and data from observation). I was always sceptical about first impressions and I was critical of the initial findings. At the end of this process 38 patterns had emerged.

In addition to that, a two-dimensional matrix or 'Role-ordered matrix' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:122) was developed in order to understand and conceptualize each of the cases better. The participants were placed on the columns and the emerging patterns on the rows of the matrix (see Table 4.6: Role-ordered matrix-school 3). In this way, nine matrices – one for each case- were created that helped me to construct a holistic picture of the interview answers. Meantime, by using different colours of markers, the similarities and differences among the quotes of each case were illustrated giving a visualised form to each case analysis. This process allowed the unique patterns of each case to emerge. In addition, it brought together organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form which helped me to make sense of each case separately (Stake, 1995; Patton, 2002). Therefore, the second phase of analysis gave me a rich familiarity with each case and led me to write an analytic description of each successful head, to make some interpretation regarding the entirety.



	Patterns	Head#3	Deputy	Teacher#1	Teacher#2	Parents	Students
1.	<b>Caring</b>	I want everybody in my school to be happy, to have nice time in school and mainly to feel the love.	... for whatever happens she will be with us, she is the kind of person that she is first a friend and then a head.	She approaches us as human beings and not as teachers of her school, she always tries for this.	In this school I have found understanding, she helps me with my teaching schedule without many discussions, she trusted me and we begun a very good relationship which is developed to friendship.	... I have find out that she is the kind of person that cares. She knows how to give direct solutions.	
2.	<b>Supportive</b>	I call my teacher in my office and I tell her/him 'I like what you have done continue doing it.	She always says 'I am sure that you are going to do the best because I know that you work hard'.	She says 'Girls I like this idea you can do this too' This kind of support makes me happy and I'm thinking ... I will help the team'.	Every day she finds smth positive to say to children and motivate them to work harder'.	My girls regularly tell me that Ms praise and support them.	she gives us a champion when we are good' She says 'well done' when we are quiet during school day.

Table 4.6: Role-ordered matrix-school 3

The third phase of analysis was 'the cross-case analysis' which multiplies the data set by the number of single cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994). By applying the cross-case analysis the aim was to study processes and outcomes across many cases, to understand how they were qualified by local conditions, and thus, to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In addition to that, the study of multiple cases could provide me with the possibility to develop some kind of 'transferability' beyond the specific setting of the study.

The initial goal, at cross-case analysis phase, was to reduce the data into workable, intellectually coherent units and in one place – tables and figures. Since the early steps of cross case analysis, a meta-matrix (Miles and Huberman, 1994:178) was developed, displaying all the data on one large place - sheet. The aim was to include

all the relevant data in a summarised form. For this reason, the 38 patterns that emerged in the first part of the nine cases analyses, were divided into different ways by trying to cluster data that fell together – made wider patterns in order for the data be summarized and refined. In this sense, the participants were placed on columns and the emerging patterns of each case on the rows of the matrix. By studying carefully the meta-matrix I was looking for clusters involving at least three cases. Every time a cluster of patterns emerged, I catalogued it and then looked for a name to describe that cluster (the sub-theme). Through these steps twelve new clusters emerged and the corresponding number of matrices - which were named ‘clustered summary tables’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994:182), were created to represent the clusters, the patterns and the representative quotes or notes (see Table 4.7: Summary table-professional growth).

Promoting professional growth				
	Cases	2	3	
Patterns	Modelling	<p>H p.5 I try to be the example at any activity that I propose to the teachers, students, parents or other stakeholders. I show with my example that what I have suggest could become true, I do it first, I think this is the way that a leader be successful'</p> <p>p.11 I usually help the younger teachers who have less experience, I want to see me how I work with children</p> <p>DH p3 '...or he indirectly shows to a teacher that she/he has to care about children safety during the breaks</p> <p>T1 p.6 Stm he visits informally our classrooms, interrupting the lesson for few minutes and models teaching approaches and behaviours as he is more experienced ...</p> <p>T2 p.10 'I have my h as my example as he always say to us ...</p> <p>SHD he used modelling p. 4</p> <p>e.g. asking questions to students</p>		
	Monitoring and mentoring			

Table 4.7: Summary table – professional growth

In the next step of the cross-case analysis I ordered and explained the data. The matrices with clusters were organized on a 'three-way' matrix (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 241). On the first dimension the sub-themes were displayed, on the second the patterns and on the third dimension the participants. I scanned this table many times and I compared, contrasted, differentiated and noted relations between the patterns/variables of successful head teachers (see Table 4.8: Themes – Understanding and developing people). The aim of that practice was to understand and conceptualize the meaning of successful headship leadership better. By the end of this procedure six clusters had emerged. Then I searched for a name to describe that cluster (theme).

Themes									
Themes	Sub-themes	Patterns	Heads	Dep. H	T1	T2	Parents	Students	Shadow
Understanding and developing people	Promoting professional growth	Modelling							
		Monitoring and mentoring							
		Peer coaching							
		Collaboration among teachers							
		Risk taking							
		Capacity building							
		Induction of newcomers							
		Providing resources							
		Utilization of meetings							
	Students learning	Monitoring st. learning							
		Caring for academic-social gl							
		Being visible							
		Protection of teaching time							
		Praising students							
		Creating a learning environment							
	Person-centred leadership								

Table 4.8: Themes – Understanding and developing people

Finally, during the data analysis, efforts were made to ensure the trustworthiness of this process and the clarity of findings. Therefore, patterns, clusters and themes were always double checked and relevant quotations were richly presented in the text in order to enable the reader to check the researcher's interpretations and to enable anyone interested in transferability (this term will be discussed in the following sections) to have the appropriate information for his/her judgement.

#### **4.8 Criteria for Evaluating this Research: Establishing Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) ask the question regarding research trustworthiness: 'how do you persuade your audience, including yourself, that the findings of your inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?' And perhaps more importantly, when the only research instrument was myself: What should I do to confirm my findings or what should I do to disconfirm them? (Stake, 1995:15).

The criteria of judging – establishing and assessing- the quality of research are widely discussed in the literature by qualitative and quantitative researchers (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Hammersley, 1992). The discussion is focused on whether, these criteria of judging the quantitative research quality is appropriate to transfer into qualitative research. Particularly, two central concepts are used by quantitative researchers in measuring the quality and the wider potential of their research. These are validity and generalizability (Robson, 2002). Validity refers to accuracy of the result and generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable beyond the study directly involved (Robson, 2002).

Qualitative researchers suggest different criteria of judging the quality of a qualitative study. Specifically, they propose the concept of trustworthiness and they relate it to the philosophical background of the naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the term of trustworthiness consists of four criteria: credibility, which addresses the 'truth value' (p.290) of the inquiry; transferability, which addresses the basic question of applicability; dependability, which responds to the question of consistency; and conformability, which addresses the basic question of the neutrality of the inquiry.

The establishment of the trustworthiness during the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data presents a particular challenge. The researcher has to be aware of the importance of those processes in judging the trustworthiness of a piece of research, not only at the beginning of the study, but also throughout its development. Since the philosophical background of this research is related to the naturalistic paradigm, its quality was judged by adopting the term of trustworthiness.

#### **4.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility deals with the question of how one's findings match reality. 'Do the findings capture what is really there?' (Merriam, 1988:166-167) or "how can one establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings of a particular enquiry for the persons with which, and the context in which, the enquiry was carried out?" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 403). For the establishment of the credibility of the findings a set of techniques was drawn up: acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity and the use of triangulation.

The first technique to establish the credibility of the research findings is to acknowledge my subjectivity. Doing qualitative research I was inevitably the primary data-collection instrument. The human as instrument, according to Lincoln (1985a), is not perfect but infinitely adaptable, and because qualitative researchers deal with multiple perspectives they require, above all, as she emphasises, an instrument:

capable of recognising, sorting, and honouring those multiple realities, one that is capable ... of assessing the role of that meaning in shaping human behaviour ... the human instrument is capable of identifying, taking into account, coping with and ... -unlike computers and paper-and-pencil tests- is capable of understanding the role of the irrational as powerful emotive device. Because human behaviour is rarely rational, the perfect instrument is one that acts in sympathy with the emotional, nonrational, spiritual, and affiliational renderings of its respondents (Lincoln, 1985a:142).

Being the only instrument of inquiry, subjectivity is an obvious factor. Lincoln (1985b) argues that in carrying out qualitative inquiry it is impossible to be neutral or objective about your investigations, your experiments, your methods, or your rational processes. Objectivity, she continues, 'as a pursuit in empirical investigations turns out to be a chimera, a Holy Grail, an illusion, and a snare' (p. 35). I did not, therefore, try to deny my subjectivity; nevertheless, I attempted to acknowledge it by involving it in the analysis.

Subjectivity, however, as Lincoln (1985b) concludes:

is not the appropriate or only alternative. The concept of perspective may be more useful, as it implies multiple views of the same phenomenon, multiple foci that may be brought to bear, and multiple realities that are constructed at the same phenomenon (Lincoln, 1985b:35-36).

In this sense, I was open to different possibilities by continually seeking alternative explanations of my interpretations. I tried to examine each emerging theme from

different angles, different perspectives of staff, parents, students and heads themselves, for the purpose of developing a richer understanding.

A second technique of establishing credibility in research findings is triangulation:

By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources, (researchers) can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single observer, and single-theory studies (Denzin, 1989: 307, cited in Patton, 2002:555)

The strategy of triangulation is very important during the data analysis because (a) it provides a diverse way of looking at the same phenomenon and (b) it strengthens confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn. Patton (2002) argues that there are four kinds of triangulation which can contribute to the trustworthiness of qualitative analysis:

1. Methods triangulation: Checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods
2. Triangulation of sources: Checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method
3. Analyst triangulation: using multiple analysts to review findings
4. Theory/perspective triangulation: Using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data (Patton 2002:556).

In this study I triangulated methods and data sources. Despite criticisms of this as a means of validating data, it enabled the analysis of both similarities and negative data.

Initially, I triangulated diverse methods of data collection; observations provided a check on what the people in the sample reported in the interviews. After that, as I have argued in a previous section (multi-perspective approach), I put great emphasis on the triangulation of resources. I used the multiple perspective approach to check the consistency of head teachers practices from different angles.

#### **4.8.2 Transferability**

Another way of ensuring the trustworthiness of findings, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the criterion of transferability. Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) give emphasis to context as a natural limit to generalizations. They argue that the degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts, what they call 'fittingness'. Therefore, the transferability of practices could be done with a critical perspective.

Researchers can enhance transferability of research findings in the following ways. First, by providing a rich, thick description of the case so that anyone interested in transferability has the appropriate information for his/her judgment. In the analysis of the successful leadership study, I provided adequate raw data prior to interpretation, so that, the readers can consider their own alternative interpretations. Second, the transferability of research is enhanced by having purposive sampling. This helps in maximizing the scope and range of information gathered and hence to illuminate the most necessary factors to take into account when comparing two contexts for similarity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). In the particular study, the selection of school contexts were included schools with a range of socioeconomic status, schools of different school sizes and head teachers who varied as to the years of experiences.

#### **4.8.3 Dependability and conformability**

Two additional ways of ensuring trustworthiness of findings are the criteria of dependability and conformability. Particularly, dependability entails the researcher



being examined by an external auditor to determine the complete records at all phases of the research process. Bryman (2004) argued that auditing has not become a popular approach to enhancing the dependability of qualitative research because it is very demanding of auditors.

The last way which establishes trustworthiness for findings is the criterion of conformability. Conformability is concerned with ensuring that, while recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith (Bryman, 2004). In other words, the audit ensures the relation between the researcher's claims, interpretations and the actual raw data.

#### **4.9 Ethics**

Conducting qualitative research raises a set of ethical considerations which need to be taken into account. These ethical considerations guided the decision-making process regarding the design of this study, but also its implementation, the analysis of the data and the reports of findings. Generally, ethical concerns are linked to the topics of informed consent, the participants rights, and the protection from physical, emotional or other kind of harm (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Patton (2002) underlined that it is important to deal with the ethical dimension of research:

Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people-qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches (Patton, 2002:407).

The present study poses a number of questions in this respect such as: 'how can informed consent be obtained' 'how can the rights of participants be respected' 'how

can the privacy of participants be respected?' 'how can the rights of students be respected?' 'how can anonymity be respected when findings are to be disseminated?'

Furthermore, I kept in mind questions like:

What might this study do to hurt the people involved? How likely is it that such harm will occur? ... What's my relationship with the people I am studying? Am I telling the truth? Do we trust each other?  
(Miles and Huberman, 1994:292)

These concerns were considered from the beginning of the research and decisions were made in an attempt to ensure that the ethical issues of the study were seriously taken into account. Concerns have revolved particularly around two areas: the issue of informed consent and the issue of participants' privacy (Homan, 2002; Tickle, 2002; Christians, 2005).

The first consideration is the issue of informed consent and it is in many respects an important area within social research ethics (McNamee and Bridges, 2002).

According to Homan (2002:24) informed consent is the requirement that participants 'be informed of the nature and implications of research and that participation be voluntary ... Its intention is that human subjects are aware that they are taking part in research with all its hazards ...'. To overcome this kind of ethical problem in this study, an effort was made to ensure that participants were informed and they were able to understand the nature of the research. At the beginning of the fieldwork, the main purpose and the overall procedures were explained to the head teachers, teachers, parents and students. The role of each of the participant in the research was analyzed in detail, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and their right to withdraw from the activity at any stage for whatever reason was indicated.

Special attention was given to informed consent in the case of students interviews (Homan, 2002). According to Robson (2002) ‘... legally under-age children, and others who may not be in position to appreciate what is involved, the parents or guardians should be asked for their consent’ (p. 70). For this reason, the parents of a number of students were informed ahead of time with a letter about the purpose of the research, the kind of interview (group interview) that their child would be part of, the themes of the questions and the rights of their child during the interview (see Appendix B). Parents would sign the agreement in order for their children to be part of the group interviews. Similarly, children were informed, at their level, about the purposes of the research, that the interviews were voluntary and that they had the right to conclude the interview at any time, or to refuse answering any of my questions. During interviews the primary aim of this study was to ensure that, each student’s views were listened to with respect (Davie and Galloway, 1996).

The second consideration is related to the degree to which invasions of privacy can be condoned (Kimmel, 1988; Bryman, 2004). The issue of privacy is linked to issues of anonymity or confidentiality in the research process (Tickle, 2002). Only the researcher had access to the interview and other data sources and the personal information concerning research participants kept confidential. The location of schools was disguise and the names of people were changed to pseudonyms. The aim was to prevent individuals from being identified when the data is released. I asked their permission to use a tape recorder during interviews. I also informed them that at any time during the conversation if they felt that they wanted to stop, it was their right.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

Successful headship leadership is still an inadequately researched area in Cyprus.

With this study I have sought to identify and understand the complex and unpredictable paths of headship leadership. To understand the way successful primary heads lead schools in Cyprus, their values, skills, as well as their strategies, their plans and their methods, by using a multi-perspective approach.

In the next chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) of the thesis I will present the analysis and interpretations of the data. Particularly, Chapters 5 and 6 explore the similarities and differences between successful head teachers in Cyprus and Chapter 7 discuss the groupings of those heads. This thesis ends with the conclusions drawn from the findings of my research (Chapter 8).

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CROSS CASE ANALYSIS (1): SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a cross case analysis of the data by using clustering processes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I will present the common themes from the data and relate these to the research and literature on head teacher leadership reported in Chapters one and three. These revealed a multi-dimensional rather than a linear pattern of successful heads practices. I will then develop an empirically grounded framework for understanding successful headship in primary schools of Cyprus (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to the literature, successful leaders emphasize the humanitarian aspect of their role, to care and support people (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Sergiovanni, 2000; Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford, 2005; Noddings, 2006). They have an important role in setting a moral purpose, in building and maintaining a vision and a direction for a school and at the same time they are strategic (Day and Leithwood, 2007). In order to communicate and influence participants, heads exercise qualities of trust, respect and integrity (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Gold et al., 2003; Lazaridou, 2007). They have also been found to care about students and teachers learning and use formal and informal strategies to maximise these (Barth, 1990; Stoll, Fink and Earl, 2002; Hargreaves, 2003b).

The analysis of the cases began with a confirmation that all the heads in the sample were successful in leading their schools. Each one was utilizing the core practices that Leithwood et al. (2006) (see Chapter 2) identified. Of course, they were not used in

the same ways or with the same level of intensity. Heads varied in the way they used strategies and set priorities. Each head scanned the contextual conditions and constraints and then adopted different strategies in order to enable school improvement. After the initial data analysis of each case it was clear that each individual participant of the study – deputy heads, teachers, students and parents - who were interviewed, supported the view that the head of his/her school was successful, however, they gave a variety of reasons for this.

After the separate analysis of each case, I proceeded to a cross case analysis of the data by using clustering processes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Six themes emerged from the data: (1) leading morally and emotionally, (2) developing and understanding people, (3) learning heads, (4) similarities of headship approaches and social context, (6) leading democratically and (7) rotation policy: a critique. This chapter will discuss the first two themes: (a) ‘leading morally and emotionally’. This consists of three sub themes: values, beliefs and vision, moral support and emotional understanding and includes the practices and efforts of leaders to establish shared purpose in school, to increase commitment to school goals and everybody to be able to achieve high-performance; (b) is ‘understanding and developing people’ which is associated with three sub themes: promoting teachers’ professional growth, students learning and person-centred approaches (see Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

Understanding and developing people includes practices that are connected to the improvement of teaching skills and knowledge, providing support to all people that are related to school and improve their confidence, their motivation and their self efficacy for the accomplishing of school goals. At the same time, they care about the students learning and achievements. Successful heads practices in this theme, also

showed that they cared for the personal development of their staff and cared for the well being of their students. The remaining themes will be discussed in the next chapter.

<b>Summary Table: themes, sub-themes and patterns</b>	
<b>5.2 Leading morally and emotionally</b>	
<b>1. Values , beliefs and vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Communication abilities</li> <li>b. Trust and respect</li> </ul>
<b>2. Moral support and care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Moral support</li> <li>b. Care</li> </ul>
<b>3. Emotional understanding</b>	
<b>5.3 Understanding and developing people</b>	
<b>1. Promoting teachers' professional growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Modelling</li> <li>b. Monitoring and mentoring</li> <li>c. Peer coaching</li> <li>d. Collaboration among teachers</li> <li>e. Risk taking</li> <li>f. Capacity building</li> <li>g. Induction of newcomers</li> <li>h. Providing resources</li> <li>i. Utilizations of meetings</li> </ul>
<b>2. Students learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Monitoring students learning</li> <li>b. Caring for academic-social goals</li> <li>c. Being visible</li> <li>d. Protection of the teaching time</li> <li>e. Praising students</li> <li>f. Creating a learning environment</li> </ul>
<b>3. Person-centred leadership</b>	

Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns



## 5.2 Leading Morally and Emotionally

In this section, I will discuss the first theme of this study that is named 'leading morally and emotionally'. It consists of the three sub-themes: 'Values, beliefs and vision', 'Moral support and care' and 'Emotional understanding' as are seen in Table

### 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns.

#### 5.2.1 Values, beliefs and vision

*My teachers know that they have my full support and whatever we do is for the benefit of our school ... so they give their best. I am always next to them [teachers] ... I provide them any service they ask for ... I act like a servant. I think there is a nice climate in this school and they know that I am fair minded with everybody so they try hard ... the 'backdoor negotiations' do not characterize my way of leading ... whatever I have to say I will say it in front of them ... I never use 'back door negotiations' (Head, School 10).*

The first sub-theme that emerged from the data related to the values of successful heads. These values had a significant role in the quality of leadership that was provided by the heads in the particular schools. Recent studies illustrate the importance of values in leadership and how these values informed heads' practices (Leithwood, Begley and Cousins, 1992; Dempster and Mahony, 1998; Day et al. 2000; Campbell et al., 2003; Gold et al., 2003). These studies demonstrate the way school heads were driven by their personal, moral and educational values and were able to articulate them, creating a clear sense of institutional purpose and direction. Similarly, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) believe that school leaders' values and beliefs constitute the 'educational platform' (p. 144) which guides their actions. In the same vein, Begley (2001) emphasises that leaders, consciously or unconsciously employ values as guides in interpreting situations and suggest appropriate administrative action.

These successful heads in Cyprus seemed to articulate a strongly held set of educational and personal values that informed their leadership approaches. These values, as they reported, were influenced by their personal histories, their relationships and their education. For example, all of the heads noted that a great influence on their personal values came from the values of their family environments.

*I was the oldest child in my family and I was responsible for cooking and taking care of my brother and sisters after school hours. My parents were working for very long hours. These responsibilities and difficulties led me to work even harder in order to have the opportunity for higher education (Head, School 1).*

*The family, the church – I was very close to church community when I was young, I attended Sunday school and I was a chorister – all the schools I attended and my higher education ... all these factors shaped my personality (Head, School 8).*

All the heads came from agricultural families where values of honesty and learning dominated their early years. Also, a major influence appeared to be the Orthodox religion which had an important impact on their values. Further, charity, humanitarian and democratic values were in the centre of their value system. Last but not least, were their formal studies which also had a great influence on their values. Although these values guided their practice, they did not ignore the Ministry's philosophy and the school's regulations.

Specifically, the data revealed practices that were related to the way successful heads communicated and shared their values and beliefs (see Table<sup>1</sup> 5.2: Communicate values, beliefs and vision). They seemed to map out communication routes in order to successfully communicate their vision and give a particular direction to their schools. The communication abilities also appeared to lead to the development of feelings of

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<sup>1</sup> The tables of chapter five, six and seven emerged after triangulation of the data

loyalty and commitment towards the school vision and goals. In addition, the integrity of head teachers led to the development of a climate of trust and mutual respect in their schools. Evans (2000) found that ‘integrity is a fundamental consistency between one’s values, goals, and actions’ (Evans, 2000:289). Overall values, beliefs and vision were developed and communicated in heads’ schools in an atmosphere of democratic spirit, where people felt free to discuss, to exchange opinions, to influence and to be influenced.

	Communicate values, beliefs and vision									
	Cases	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
Practices	Communication abilities	✓**	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓**	✓	✓**	✓*	✓
	Trust and respect	✓*	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*	✓**	✓**	✓**

Table 5.2: Communicate values, beliefs and vision

\*: The symbol of a star shows skills, qualities and strategies of successful heads in emphasis – more stars greater the emphasis

### 5.2.1.1 Communication abilities

The first practice that helped successful heads to share their values and beliefs with people around them was their ability to communicate (Nias et al., 1989; Campbell et al., 2003). The data showed that most of the heads mapped out communication routes to share their vision with teachers, students and parents. They worked hard to produce a consensus among them regarding their vision and their expectations. They made their intentions obvious with their speeches at teachers’ and parents’ meetings, at students’ assemblies, during private conversations and with their actions:

*The values and beliefs that I attempted to transmit to my own children, have influenced my behaviour as a teacher and as a head. I think that those values and beliefs can influence my teachers and my students ... I also try to influence parents through their children’s behaviour. Of*

*course, the outcome of this influence is indirect and it can be seen in the long run (Head, School 9).*

What is important in the following quotation is the connection that the head made between her educational values, the promotion of shared purpose and the establishment of high expectations for everybody:

*I always emphasize the importance of team work to students, teachers and parents: 'Let's work together to develop our school, to improve our school'. The expression 'our school' dominates our meetings, so this idea is reinforced in students', teachers' and parents' minds. In this way they develop high expectations both for themselves and other people (Head, School 1).*

Along with the establishment of communication routes and the development of a shared purpose among people, a large number of heads (N=7) believed, that they communicated their values and beliefs to their staff by modelling the expected values (Noddings, 2002) and through the integrity and consistency of their actions (Day et al., 2000):

*I can't explain how I transfer my vision or my values and beliefs to my teachers. For example, my teachers feel that I care about our students ... every time I get out of my office and the students come to me in order to tell me their problems or ... say 'good morning'. I think that this culture is transferred to my teachers and as a result they express their love to students (Head, School 9).*

Teachers also supported the argument that their heads communicated successfully their vision (a shared purpose) and inspired them:

*First of all, our head has a vision for the school and we all share this vision. She (head) influences the people around her and every one feels that he/she has some objectives in common with her. I feel that she has clear goals for the school (Deputy head, School 6).*

*She communicates her vision very well. We trust her because she reflects a strong self-reliance every time she speaks. She transmits this self-reliance to us (Teacher 1, School 6).*

Overall, everybody agreed that heads had the ability to help people around them to develop a shared purpose. Most of the teachers and parents that were related to schools for a long time, reported that their heads (after their arrival) had rebuilt their schools' reputation with enthusiasm and passion for work (Day, 2004b). These heads gave a direction to the school and especially inspired stability and safety to the people around them (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003):

*The leadership style that has been adopted by our head led our school to improvement. This school faced serious problems in the past. He is doing a great job (Parent, School 8).*

*We work in a very nice environment – I was at this school before the appointment of this head – and I can see the difference. Now everything is better than before; this change is due to the head because there is a low staff turnover (Teacher 1, School 10).*

*Our head made us feel very useful for the school. We closely collaborate with her and the teachers, in order to help our children. She is a positive thinker and her energy is spread to all the people around her (Parent, School 1).*

Similarly, teachers and parents believed that the quality of heads' characters (Harris, 2002; Goldring, Huff, May and Camburn, 2008) helped them to succeed in giving direction to the school, in inspiring everybody and in developing commitment to their school's goals. Specifically, the qualities for example of integrity, enthusiasm, kindness, honesty, compassion and tolerance were in the heads' day-to-day repertoire in communication with their staff and students:

*He is a low profile person, who speaks thoughtfully ... generally he is the kind of person that is characterised by high self-consciousness (Teacher 1, School 7).*

*His character is excellent. I think is the quality of his character that is leading us to success (Teacher 2, School 7).*

*This head is successful because he is beloved by the teachers and the parents. The majority of the parents respect him and collaborate harmoniously with him. He has low profile relationships. I have never heard of any conflicts in the school (Teacher 2, School 7).*

*I think she influences staff, students and parents by the way she speaks. She speaks very calmly (Deputy head, School 2).*

*My son loves our head and he has been influenced by her. He regularly speaks about her advices and he is looking forward to attend her lessons. I think she influences students because of her mild tempered character. She always talks to them in a low voice and with high respect (Parent, School 2).*

In most (six cases) of the cases staff reported that the values and beliefs of their head teachers influenced the way they faced their work. They seemed to believe in their heads' vision and entrusted their philosophy about school and teaching. Teachers reflected on values and beliefs that heads communicated and formed their own set of values. This kind of school environment helped them to be more creative, productive and efficient in teaching. Staff also reported positive effects on their job satisfaction, self-efficacy and motivation:

*I feel that I enjoy the most perfect period of my nine year employment. Actually, I view myself going along with my head's goals and pace. Generally, I feel that there are many things going on at the same time in this school but I am happy with the whole process (Teacher 1, School 2).*

*From now on we have similar goals. It is not any more our head's vision, but it is our vision and for sure our and her ambitions are common. Consequently, I take part in all school activities and initiatives because I enjoy doing them and not because I am asked to (Teacher 2, School 1).*

Similarly, a deputy head emphasized how his head influenced people around her:

*She is a very optimistic person and this feeling is transmitted to both teachers and students. Particularly, students are influenced by her perspective of life and they view the school and lessons in a positive manner. This attitude is an additional factor that leads the school to success (Deputy head, School 6).*

By and large, heads placed a high premium upon personal values such as integrity, consensus, kindness and honesty. They exercised moral leadership and they

succeeded to transmit their values, beliefs and vision to their staff, students and parents, through their communication skills and the development of excellent communication routes. Successful heads in this study were people oriented diminishing the rational orientation of their position. Despite the centralized and hierarchical system successful heads seemed to successfully communicate their moral purpose to people around them in order to achieve school goals. They achieved good communication with their staff and students, while at the same time applying the predetermined Ministry decisions.

#### **5.2.1.2 Trust and respect**

The second practice that helped heads to communicate their personal values and beliefs was their achievement to develop a climate of trust and respect in their schools (Loader, 1997; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000; Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Louis, 2007). The feeling of trust was very strong among the heads, the staff, the students and the parents in this study. They trusted and required trust from their staff. Once staff, students and parents trusted them (heads) and their practices, it was easier for the head teachers to communicate their vision and to influence the people around them (Loader, 1997; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000):

*At the beginning of the academic year she told to us 'I trust all my teachers and there will be no discrimination'. I think we trust her ... I feel that she entrusts us too. She regularly says 'I entrust my teachers, I know that you do your job very well'. I feel that she entrusts me and I feel free to do my job. At the same time, I know that she is there to help me if I need her assistance (Teacher 2, School 6).*

*She faces everything with the perspective of a fellow, of a friend. She is not that kind of person who asserts her authority ... she never shows her power because of her position; this is important. When the head respects you, you are ready to put more effort (Deputy head, School 3).*

Much evidences showed that this kind of climate promoted the building of interpersonal relationships among all the people related to the school. In this way, they led staff, students and parents to be more productive and to feel happy with what they were doing. Therefore, they helped teachers to feel motivated and to improve their self-efficacy (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999):

*The strategy for developing a climate of trust is that of having good interpersonal relationships. These relationships convince others of my intensions, so they do not feel that goals are imposed by hierarchy and in this way we develop a friendly relationship through which I can reach my goals (Head, School 8).*

*She creates a climate of trust by her nice and polite way of behaviour. In other words, she inspires us, she trusts us ... we feel comfortable to approach her. At the same time, she spreads the feeling that she is the kind of person that keep secrets. Parents trust her a lot ... they visit her in order to get her assistance to solve their children's problems (Deputy head, School 9).*

Parents and students also supported the argument that the heads promoted a climate of trust in their schools:

*The students seem to respect and trust him. My daughter respects him a lot. He also respects and trusts what we have done as a parents' association and he always encourages us (Parent, School 8).*

*My child respects our head very much. Her nice way of talking influences students and makes them trust her. She expresses her love to them, a lot of love (Parent, School 2).*

In addition, heads worked to strengthen that climate of trust throughout their schools by maintaining a focus on fairness in both formal and informal interactions with the people around them:

*I think that trust is gained. The head should be very careful because he/she has to do with human beings ... In order to enjoy her/his teachers' and parents' trust the head should not make any discrimination. The head knows her/his staff's abilities ... and when she/he transforms the specific abilities of each teacher for the school benefit – each one contributing in*



*the area that he/she is good- then your staff will realize that you respect them, and acknowledge their abilities. In this way, you earn their trust (Head, School 6).*

*Our experiences with her led us to trust her. She supports people by her actions ... she is fair. For example, if she notices that a teacher is better than another in a particular issue, she will not praise the first and downgrade the second. She does not discriminate among teachers (Deputy head, School 6).*

*I think that my staff wants me to be beside them, to support them around any problem that will emerged ... I try to support them within my limitations (Head, School 9).*

Although the system in Cyprus does not support the tenure of head teachers at a school for long periods of time, successful heads created the right communication routes in a short period; they managed to build healthy interpersonal relationships with the people around them in order to build the idea of shared purpose and to establish commitment to school goals. The vision and practices of these heads were organized around similar personal values, such as fairness, kindness, integrity, equity or justice, freedom and respect. They seemed to inspire loyalty in their staff, increased their commitment to school goals and influenced them to work harder in order to promote their school's goals (Hodgkinson, 1991; Evans, 2000; Campbell et al., 2003). Teachers seemed to be so motivated that they surpassed themselves in an attempt to achieve school goals. Both heads and teachers had passion for their job (Day, 2004b; Davies, 2008).

Previous research has highlighted that, successful heads' leadership is driven by an individual value system (Dempster and Mahony, 1998; Riley and MacBeath, 1998; Day et al., 2000; Campbell et al., 2003; Gold et al., 2003). The multiple perspective study conducted in England among twelve successful heads has demonstrated that they communicated a clear set of personal and educational values which represented

their moral purposes for the school (Day et al., 2000). The practices of those heads were organized around a number of core personal values: modelling and promotion of respect, fairness and equality, caring for peoples well being, integrity and honesty.

Findings from this study pointed to a similar picture. Although the successful heads had different personalities (some of them were low profile and some were dynamic and powerful people) they developed similar qualities and practices in communicating their personal and educational values in exercising leadership and in giving a moral dimension to their leadership. They also achieved a balance between their expectations, values and vision with the expectations of the Ministry. At the same time values such as fairness, equity, integrity, support for others (discussed in the next section) and caring (discussed in next section) were an every-day experience for staff and students. This intensive emphasis on values might be the result of the social phenomenon that older people –over 50's- are strongly related to religion values. Despite, therefore, the school structures successful heads considered their personal and professional values as very important and they informed their leadership actions.

In this section, I have discussed the first sub-theme – from leading morally and emotionally- which focuses on how successful heads communicate their values, beliefs and vision in their schools. In the next section, I will discuss the second sub-theme which illustrates how successful heads provide moral support and care for people around them (see Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes, patterns).

### 5.2.2 Moral support and care

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data was the provision of support (Blase and Blase, 1998; MacBeath, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Fernandez, 2000) and care (Noddings, 2002; Day and Leithwood, 2007) by the successful heads for people around them. This section will discuss those abilities of successful primary school heads.

#### 5.2.2.1 Moral support

*She supports us in many different ways ... she encourages us to try new teaching methods ... she encourages us to attend workshops or conferences and present our work. She always, kisses us after a school event ... she congratulates us for our students' activities, for our classrooms' sign-boards and for many simple things. For example, if I put on new clothes today she would say 'you are very pretty today' (Teacher, School 9).*

The provision of moral support by the heads was the first component of this sub-theme. As Stoll and Fink (1995) found, support was related to personal availability, kindness and caring where teachers and administrators made time for each other. In this study, heads seemed to make the people around them feel positive about the school and learning, by affecting their self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation and their commitment to school goals. Although all of the heads reported that they used support in their practices, some of them (five out of nine heads) seemed to put particular emphasis on this issue (see Table 5.3: Moral support and care). In the schools that heads emphasized support, teachers, parents and students underlined that, despite the fact that, their heads were very busy, whenever they needed support their heads stopped what they were doing and helped them. Support in this study took different forms. It could be support for the professional growth of teachers (which will be

discussed in the next section of this chapter), students' support (which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter), resource support and moral support, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Moral support and care										
Cases		1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
Practices	Moral Support	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓*	✓
	Care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓**	✓

Table 5.3: Moral support and care

The provision of moral support seemed to be very important as it was mentioned by all the teachers and deputy heads of all schools. There was a strong sense among the staff that their heads respected and acknowledged what they (the staff) had done. Regularly, this moral support was shown by praising, offering positive reinforcement, thanking (Nias et al., 1989; Leithwood et al., 1999) and caring (Noddings, 2002). This behaviour made teachers feel appreciated and motivated to keep a hard working rhythm. The following heads' quotation, for example, illustrated their beliefs about moral support:

*During monitoring I provide support to everybody. There is continuous reward for teachers, parents and students: oral and written. I distinguish and respect what is positive and ignore what is negative. I follow the perspective of life that says: the glass is half full (and not half empty). This kind of approach makes people feel that they exist, that they are part of the team (Head, School 2).*

*The acknowledgement of their work is one of my everyday practices. I support, encourage and praise them for everything they do, privately, or publicly during teachers' and parents' meetings (Head, School 1).*

Teachers, stressed the significance of the role of moral support by their heads. On the one hand, in one of the cases, two teachers reported that although they got ethical support from their head, they needed even more. They pointed out that their head was

discreet and he did not talk too much. On the other hand, the teachers generally felt satisfied with the way their heads supported them. They stated that their heads praised them privately or publicly for their actions or behaviours in the schools (Harris, 2007). These kinds of practices made them feel more confident, motivated and helped them to increase their commitment to the school goals:

*She is the only person in my career that has recognized in such a degree my work. She recognizes my work publicly and especially privately. This is very important to me (Teacher 1, School 2).*

*She rewards us ethically. She is the kind of head that offers her support for whatever we do, she encourages us and she praises us privately and in front of our colleagues (Teacher 1, School 1).*

*She supports us with her speeches. For example, there were times that I went to school and I felt down. Our head knew how I felt and she invited me in her office. She would raise my moral by talking to me. She told me how good I was in teaching, and about the parents', the inspector's and my colleagues' positive comments. After that, I felt much better, I felt rejuvenated. She follows the same approach in a superlative degree with the students (Teacher 2, School 2).*

*She encourages us by telling us positive comments. For example, she says: 'Bravo (well done) girls, you have done it very well'. She will repeat it to the parents' association, to students' meetings ... I feel that my efforts are acknowledged and respected ... After a while she comes back to this subject and she might say: 'I know that you have worked hard and you have been tired ... I appreciate this' (Teacher 2, School 6).*

Along with praising, all the heads consciously used thanking as an everyday practice to encourage their teachers to reach high levels of learning as well as to feel appreciated and valued in the school environment (Nias et al., 1989):

*She does not miss the opportunity to thank us even for trivial things. She thanks us publicly during the teachers' meetings or personally ... she always says a positive comment to every one of us, encouraging and supporting all of her teachers. She usually says 'I know that you are very tired, I know that I ask for too many things; but if you do not want to do it we will not do it (Deputy head, School 9).*

*I feel comfortable to do my job in this school with our head. This makes me feel satisfaction. She always gives me feedback and support. She gives*

*me the motive to move forward despite the problems that might arise (Teacher, School 6).*

Discussing this issue with heads it was clear that they expected to influence their staff positively by praising, encouraging and thanking them. By using these practices they hoped to help their staff feel job satisfaction, self-efficacy and confidence. Teachers made these issues clear from their answers:

*She offers us a lot of support. Although I spend much of my personal time during the afternoon on school activities, it does not bother me, because I feel personal satisfaction. She appreciates, acknowledges and respects everything we do and she gives us feedback by encouraging us (Teacher 2, School 2).*

*I am happy in this school because I feel an important link in the chain. My head encourages me and motivates me to keep working as hard as I can (Teacher 2, School 2).*

*This kind of support makes me happy and I always think that I can help the team (Teacher 1, School 3).*

Moral support also came in the form of heads presenting their teachers positively to their inspector, in order to increase teachers' grades. Teachers' evaluation in Cyprus is a very crucial issue. The higher that grade is, the easiest it is for a teacher to be promoted. The data analysis showed that all successful heads showed support for their teachers to school inspector:

*Apart from the every day support provided, he supports his teachers during the inspectors' visits too. This kind of support is very important. The head of the school projects the teachers' work outside the school and to the inspectors. This fact is highly respected by our colleagues and they trust him (Deputy head, School 8).*

*She is positive in everything we are doing and she tries to 'discovers' our capabilities in order to mention them to the school inspector (Deputy head, School 2).*

*He always provides support to his teachers during the inspector's visits ... we always feel confident because we know his great influence to the inspector. He is the kind of person that is characterized by his persuasiveness (Teacher, School 8).*

*... Once, she was with the inspector ... she created a very positive picture for the school and the teachers (Deputy head, School 6).*

In general, these heads in Cyprus seemed to support their staff and people around them. It was common practice for them to praise, encourage, thank and care about their staff and students. They also acknowledged the hard work and the great commitment of their staff to school goals and they encouraged them to keep working with the same zest and motivation. Support also was concerned with head teachers' availability, which means that they stayed close to their teachers, students and parents and provided them with whatever they needed. Successful heads, as it will be stated in the next section (students learning- being visible), were able to recognise how they spent their time and supporting people seemed to be one of their priorities.

Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. Although their research was conducted in different countries (i.e. Canada, U.K.) they have found that support was the norm in successful head teachers' schools (Nias et al., 1989; Stoll and Fink, 1995; Blase and Blase, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Day et al., 2000; Fernandez, 2000).

For example, teachers in Blase and Blase (1998) study reported that their heads supported them privately and publicly aiming to motivate and to reward, to enhance self-esteem, to demonstrate caring and to gain compliance with expectations.

Leithwood et al. (1999) in a review of three mixed methods studies in 14 schools found that head teachers provided individual support to their teachers. This support was shown by offering positive reinforcement that made staff feel appreciated.

#### **5.2.2.2 Care**

Caring is the second component of the sub-theme 'Moral support and caring' (see also Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns). Caring is a quality of successful headship. Although most of the theories about caring are related to teacher and students relationships, these relationships may extend to headship relationships too. According to Zembylas and Isenbarger (2002), caring is about longing for the goodness of all students and teachers. Noddings (1992) makes it more specific and points out that caring requires head teachers to elicit and listen to how students and teachers are feeling, to evaluate their purposes, to help them engage in self-evaluation, and to help them grow as participants in caring relations.

In this study, all successful heads appeared to care genuinely for their staff and students. However, some of them – two women and a man- seemed to give particular emphasis to caring. This quality of head teachers had taken different forms during their practice of leadership. It could be caring for the well being of their staff and students and caring for the personal and professional development of their staff (this issue will be discussed in the next section).

The provision of caring seemed to be very vital in school life as it was pointed out by a large number of teachers, deputy heads and students in schools. There was a strong sense among the staff that their heads thought about them, worried about them and desired the best for them. Specifically, heads expressed caring by showing their love and friendship to their staff and students. They focused their attention on the needs of people around them (Noddings, 2001).



*I want them to know that their head cares about them ... I want them to be aware that I know how much they work ... that I am always there to understand and support them (Head, School 8).*

*Last June my teachers gave me a card. When I read the wishes I felt that I am one of their friends and that they recognize that I love them and care for them ... I hope that I influence them ... I feel that they are my real associates and I will do my best to make them happy and not to work under pressure (Head, School 9).*

A large number of deputy heads, teachers and students supported the argument that caring was one of their head teacher's strong quality. The provision of caring seemed to influence teachers by deepening their commitment to the schools' purpose and by increasing their loyalty to their heads:

*She is a very emotional person, she shows understanding to our problems, and she is interested in what makes us happy or ill-humoured. (Teacher, School 9).*

*She is in contact with children, she discusses their problems ... she helps the teachers solve the problems that they face in the classroom (Deputy head, School 6).*

*Our relationship does not finish after the school time. She rings us up at home out of interest for our children's health or our family's problems (Teacher 2, School 1).*

*... he offers us ... so much love and respect that we feel that at some point we should pay back (Teacher, School 8).*

*She loves us and she expresses us her love. We have people around us who love us (Student, School 2).*

Previous researchers have highlighted the role of caring in head teachers practices (Nias, 1999; Beatty and Brew, 2004; Hargreaves, 2005). They found that heads actively responded to other people's needs on a daily basis and created a safe environment. Some others found that the emotions of love and caring were presented to be very strong in schools facing challenging circumstances. Heads were sensitive to people's needs and priorities (Harris, 2007). The notion of caring is based on healthy interpersonal relationships among people.

Findings from this study pointed to a rather similar picture but with greater intensity. The meaning of caring, as it has emerged from the data, penetrated every aspect of head teachers practices. It was part of their value system and their morality. This phenomenon might be the result of social relationships in Cyprus. For example, the relatively small size of schools created the conditions for closer relationships between heads and the people at the school – teachers, staff, students, parents. Further, people in schools had close relationships, as they might already know each other because of the small size of the country. Hierarchical and impersonal systems could not stop heads caring for and about teachers and students.

So far, I have discussed the two sub-themes: Values, beliefs and vision; moral support and care, of the theme with the title: ‘Leading morally and emotionally’. In the following section I will discuss the third (and last) sub-theme named ‘emotional understanding’.

### **5.2.3 Emotional understanding**

Working across all the cases of successful heads in Cyprus, a theme that consistently emerged was the quality of emotional understanding (Denzin, 1984). For Denzin (1984) emotional understanding occurs instantaneously, at a glance, as people reach down their past emotional experiences and read the emotional responses of those around them. Heads seemed to have the ability to read the emotional responses of the people around them. As it was noted earlier in this chapter, emotional understanding was expressed differently from head to head. There were variations in the intensity of that quality. Some of the heads were very emotional and placed a great emphasis on

the emotions of their staff and students, while some others placed slightly smaller emphasis on this quality. The data indicated that all of the successful heads demonstrated understanding for their staff and students' problems, and repeatedly helped them to overcome them. They seemed to show love, care and understanding towards everyone who was engaged in the school processes:

*My aim is to be humane to my colleagues; I try to see them as human beings. I want them to feel that they come in a pleasant environment; a creative environment that allows them to work honestly. I want them to feel that I am by their side and I care for them (Head, School 1).*

Teachers seemed to acknowledge that their heads were able to read their emotional responses, and developed emotional bonds among them by creating a safe and calm environment full of love, support, charity and consensus. This behaviour was appreciated by their staff and made the feelings of loyalty and respect for their heads deeper:

*Whatever happens to us, she will be by our side. She is the person that she is first of all a friend and then a head ... She is 'HUMANE' with capital letters (Deputy head, School 3).*

*In this school I found understanding ... She trusts me and we have a very good relationship that has developed to friendship (Teacher 2, School 3).*

*It is the first time in my career that I found compassion and humanism. She is successful because she is humanitarian ... I feel that I am accepted in the school environment (Teacher 2, School 2).*

*She provides emotional support. She even offers her support to assist us in overcoming our personal problems ... I discuss with her all the serious problems of my personal life. I trust her and I know that she will never say a word (Teacher 1, School 2).*

*As person he offers us so much. He offers so much love and respect and we feel that at some future point we should pay it back (Teacher, School 8).*

*I feel that she offers me a lot and I want to pay her back ... I want (my head teacher) to feel proud for the school and her staff (Teacher 2, School 3).*

*We have a different relationship with our head, we are friends. In this relationship we never say 'no' to any responsibilities delegated to us. I think that her ability in building those relationships makes her successful. She knows that we will not refuse to complete an assigned task delegated to us by a friend in the same manner that we would not refuse a task delegated by her (Teacher 2, School 1).*

Along with the staff, parents and students also underlined the quality of heads to develop relationships and understanding, which helped improve interaction between them. In this way, they noted that heads created an environment of strong relationships in which everybody felt, accepted and that there were people who cared about their children:

*He is first of all a humanist and then a teacher; he first thinks as a parent and then as a head or teacher (Parent, School 8).*

*I have been many times at a head teacher's office. We discussed my child's problems ... I found out that she is the person that cares about other people and especially our kids (Parent, School 3).*

These findings corroborate earlier work which has shown the connection of emotional understanding and leadership (Beatty, 2000). In this study, emotional understanding was a powerful quality of successful heads in developing a healthy environment in their schools. They showed love, caring, understanding and empathy to people around them (Hargreaves, 2003b; Harris, 2007). They managed to escape from the typical and impersonal relationship with their staff and to develop harmonious relationships with everybody. These working conditions made people feel accepted and respected in the school environment. So, in this spirit they worked harder, with passion and they wanted to offer more to their school and students.

In this part of the chapter I have discussed the first theme: 'Leading morally and emotionally'. Particularly, I have discussed the three sub themes that are related to:

values, beliefs and vision; moral support and care and emotional understanding. In the next part of this chapter I will discuss the second theme of this study, which is the longest, called ‘understanding and developing people’ (see also Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

### **5.3 Understanding and Developing People**

The second theme of this study which emerged from the data, is called ‘understanding and developing people’ and it consists of three sub themes: ‘promoting teachers’ professional growth’, ‘students learning’ and ‘person-centred leadership’(see also Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

#### **5.3.1 Promoting teachers’ professional growth**

The first sub-theme of ‘understanding and developing people’ is categorized with the name of ‘promoting teachers professional growth’. It is related to the attempts of successful heads to support the professional growth of their teachers, by integrating it into the regular practices of their teachers and linking it to the curriculum implementation. They sought to increase the capacity of others in their schools to generate high levels of learning (Barth, 1990; Joyce, Showers and Weil, 1992; Lieberman and Miller, 1992; Day, 1999; Leithwood et al., 1999; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Lambert, 2003). Successful heads created a climate in which teachers were engaged in continuous learning focused on their personal needs. According to the international research (see Chapter 2) the provision of professional growth is one of the prime responsibilities of successful heads (Hallinger and Heck, 1999; Stoll, Fink and Earl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006). Good head teachers provided opportunities for professional growth in order to have an impact on teachers’

perceptions of school conditions, to address emergent teaching needs and to encourage teaching innovation (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Blase and Blase, 1998; Clement and Vandenberghe, 2001; Southworth, 2005). In this study, promoting professional growth means the way that successful heads focused on building teachers' teaching capacity in their schools, as a means of promoting students learning, making staff feel confident with teaching, improving teachers motivation and increasing their self-efficacy.

All the head teachers of the study encouraged their teachers to voluntarily attend seminars and conferences that were offered by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus. This institute was responsible for providing professional development to teachers. Along with the formal professional growth, heads developed practices which helped to influence teachers' teaching capacities within school boundaries (see Table 5.4: Promoting professional growth).

From the data analysis, it appeared that although all the successful heads promoted the professional growth of their teachers, to satisfy teaching needs, they used different strategies to achieve it. These strategies will be analysed in the following section (see Table 5.4: Promoting professional growth). It is significant to mention that there were variations in the strength of the use of professional growth approaches, the kind of professional strategies they used as well as their frequency. Some of the heads were consistent in implementing these approaches while some others were less consistent. The implementation of these strategies seemed to be related to their priorities.

Based on the data analysis, the strategies used by heads to support the professional growth of their teachers were: modelling teaching methods and behaviours, monitoring teachers’ and students’ needs and mentoring them on teaching issues, developing peer-coaching, developing collaboration among teachers, risk taking, identifying teachers and parents talents, building capacity, care that induction of newcomers was trouble free, providing resources and utilization of teachers’ meetings. In the following sections the heads’ practices are presented in a homogenized form. However, those practices are varied in emphasis and degree among each particular head.

Promoting teachers’ professional growth											
Cases		1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Head teachers’ Strategies	Modelling	✓*	✓	✓*	✓**	✓*	-	✓*	✓	✓	
	Monitoring and mentoring	✓**	-	✓**	✓**	✓**	-	✓	✓	-	
	Peer coaching	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	
	Collaboration among teachers	-	-	✓*	-	-	✓*	-	-	-	
	Risk taking	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	
	Capacity building	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	
	Induction of newcomers	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	
	Providing resources	-	-	✓	✓*	✓	-	-	✓*	-	
	Utilization of meetings	✓*	✓*	✓*	-	✓	✓	✓*	-	-	

Table 5.4: Promoting professional growth

### 5.3.1.1 Modelling

The first strategy that the heads developed for promoting the professional growth of their teachers was modelling (Lambert, 2003; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Modelling is the power of example (Southworth, 2005). Most of the heads appeared to believe strongly in the power of example because they knew that it was a good way to influence teachers and students. They seemed to know that their visible behaviour had a great influence, communicating their values and beliefs to the school members.

They formally or informally visited classrooms in order to model good teaching. They modelled contemporary approaches to teaching, as well as positive interaction with students. Modelling aimed to satisfy teachers' direct teaching needs or to encourage innovation. For example:

*Last year, I faced some problems in teaching social studies because I was asked to teach at a higher level. I discussed my worries with him and he organized a number of lessons on my behalf for teaching my students. He performed model teaching. It was a very helpful experience. Even now when I have difficulties, he helps me ... he is always willing to help. This situation is repeated very regularly because all the teachers feel free to ask for help (Teacher 2, School 5).*

*... from the beginning of the academic year she stresses that 'if a teacher has any difficulty with any lesson he/she can ask her to teach with him/her or to give any kind of support'. Many teachers have asked her to teach a lesson for them (Deputy head, School 3).*

A teacher also supported the argument of informal modelling in her school. Informal modelling seemed to be a quick teaching practice which aimed to present an alternative perspective:

*Sometimes he visits informally our classroom, interrupts the lesson for a few minutes and models teaching approaches and behaviours, since he is far more experienced. I always have him as an example (Teacher 1, School 8).*

Modelling was considered as constructive and not as a threat, because teachers trusted and respected heads experience as well as their reputation as very good teachers.

Teachers got a different perspective to approaching lessons. They felt that they improved by observing their head's teaching. These feelings created a positive climate of learning among them (teachers):

*Whenever she enters a classroom for any type of announcement she stays there for a while and teaches for ten minutes or so. She is very well informed on the curriculum content of all classes. She knows the content of all chapters of both language and math lessons (Deputy head, School 6).*



*We feel that he is expert in teaching, he has a lot of experience ... he has a wide variety of teaching experiences in his career. We feel free to ask him for advice on lesson planning ... We expect his advice because we trust his expertise and his experience (Teacher 1, School 5).*

*In this school I have learned a lot of things ... the head comes in our classrooms and teaches any lesson we ask for. She is experienced, we are inexperienced ... I have learned a lot about behaviour management, class management ... (Teacher 1, School 3).*

Modelling appeared to be a significant strategy in the head teachers' repertoire in order to help teachers' professional growth. Teachers reported that their teaching practices were influenced by observing their heads' because there was mutual trust and respect (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). Heads' enthusiasm, passion and experience about teaching inspired them to work harder, to love their profession and increase their commitment to school goals:

*She teaches Greek language all the classes for a 40 minute period weekly. What surprises me is: even though this person has been for so many years in schools and she has so many responsibilities she never feels tired. Every time she enters my classroom, I watch her teaching with too much zest. She does not teach in a stereotype manner. Her zest and her mood motivates me (Teacher 1, School 1).*

Data analysis also indicated that all the successful heads were aware that they must set an example with their actions, to show colleagues how they should behave. The borders of modelling were extended beyond teaching practice. Heads used modelling as a medium to show the expected behaviours, actions and values to teachers and students (Leithwood et al., 1999). For example, all of them were the first to arrive and the last to leave their schools. They did themselves whatever they asked others to do:

*I spread my philosophy by being a model as a teacher ... I model discussion and communication (Head, School 9).*

Almost all of the deputy heads and teachers supported the argument that they learned many things by observing their heads:

*We have her as a model by watching the way she works and the way she communicates with people ... we want to try her way ... she has patience with students and people ... her way of communication is an example for us ... her way of behaviour is also an excellent model to be followed (Teacher 1, School 9).*

Generally, modelling (Blase and Blase, 1998) was used by a number of heads as a strategy to improve teachers' capacity, to influence teachers' values and beliefs towards school goals (modelling also discussed in the section on values and vision) and to give examples of the expected behaviours in a climate of mutual trust and respect. It is a model that had an impact on teachers perceptions of school goals, stabilized teachers' feelings of security, encouraged them to put into practice new teaching methods and, therefore, to enhance their self-efficacy and motivation.

#### **5.3.1.2 Monitoring and mentoring**

The second strategy that successful heads appeared to use in promoting professional growth in their schools was a combination of monitoring and mentoring. Research shows head teachers use monitoring and mentoring as key tasks in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Blase and Blase, 1998; Southworth, 1998; Møller, 2005). In this study these two concepts appeared to have a strong relationship. Monitoring was related to the practice of heads visiting and observing teachers at work in a spirit of peer development. Mentoring involved the provision of feedback and advice after the process of monitoring. Teachers used this feedback for reflecting on their practices for the purpose of improvement (Schön, 1983; Day, 1993). Specifically, and according to the data, four women and two men from the successful heads, visited classrooms formally or informally and observed teachers at work in order to diagnose teachers' strengths as well as their developmental needs. They also monitored how teachers worked by

walking around and observing the school. In other words, they were staying close to the action whilst also being strategic. Further, the heads who emphasized monitoring and mentoring practices were those who considered themselves as good teachers:

*I am not the head that stays in his office; I walk around the school, in the corridors or in classrooms. I monitor the way the students work and I have short conversations with them. In this way I can understand what is going on in each classroom (Head, School 8).*

In addition, after each visit to classrooms and observing teachers' teaching, some heads discussed the lesson and they gave feedback to the related teacher. Such feedback could be characterized as support and it seemed to increase teachers' self-efficacy and confidence regarding teaching:

*She attends the lessons that we teach in the presence of the inspector. After the inspector leaves the school, she provides feedback ... she might say 'I liked very much your approach or the way you organized your classroom' ... she will refer to that lesson during the students assemblies (Teacher 1, School 9).*

A female head also supported the argument that she provided feedback to her teachers after each classroom observation. This practice seemed to help teachers improve their teaching abilities by refining their methods and by enriching the range of their ideas:

*The teachers will get feedback after the observation either in my office or informally during break time. I will listen to her/his perspective on the lesson ... I will analyse the points that I like and then I will make suggestions such as: 'you could do this ... or you could try that ...' I will give him/her some new ideas and some recommendations (Head, School 1).*

In some other instances monitoring involved observation of teachers' planning and lesson design. The head teachers' aim was to help teachers improved the design of lesson plans to make them more effective in their classrooms. In this sense, after monitoring the way the teachers' developed their planning, most of the heads utilized a great deal of informal mentoring. Particularly, they advised their teachers during

breaks, how to prepare their lessons, how to develop their teaching activities and how to design the curriculum planning:

*If anyone of my teachers feels that he/she wants to discuss teaching issues with me, I am very glad to help him/her... if you stay in my office you will see them coming in everyday (Head, School 1).*

*I make suggestions to my teachers regarding the curriculum planning and they seem to accept my suggestions because they want to improve themselves (Head, School 5).*

*I propose to my teachers to find opportunities to praise their students, to make obvious to them that they love them, and that whatever they do they do it because they care for them, even when they get angry (Head, School 9).*

Teachers supported this perspective:

*He always monitors our curriculum monthly planning, and he sometimes makes suggestions to us and indicates certain ways of teaching (Teacher 1, School 8).*

*She always gives us advice regarding our students because she teaches forty minutes in each of the school classes. She monitors the students and makes some suggestions since she is the most experienced person in the school ... she has a better understanding of the students level. She might tell us: 'be careful on that issue with your students' (Teacher 2, School 1).*

*She seems that she is interested in helping every teacher separately. She speaks with them privately on teaching and she provides counselling (Deputy head, School 1).*

Essentially, monitoring and mentoring (Blase and Blase, 1998) were developed by some successful heads to enrich teachers' teaching capacity. Despite their tight schedule, they managed their time in order to stay close to the action whilst also being strategic. The employment of monitoring and mentoring in leadership practices helped teachers to reflect on their heads' feedback by refining their teaching methods and building new professional knowledge. In this way, they increased confidence in teaching and their self-efficacy.

### 5.3.1.3 Peer - coaching

The third strategy for professional development that appeared to be used by a small number of successful heads was peer-coaching (Gottesman and Jennings, 1994; Joyce and Showers, 1995; Hopkins, 2001; Lambert, 2003). Although collaborative practices were not the norm in all schools of the study (collaboration is discussed in the next section) two women and a man were using collaborative learning models like peer coaching. This strategy involved visit exchanges by teachers to their colleagues' classrooms in order to observe them teaching. By following this process heads shared roles with their teachers. Teachers had the main role during the peer - coaching activities. This strategy seemed to help teachers exchange perspectives, enrich their ideas regarding teaching and improve their teaching skills. Three of the heads, two women and a man, strongly believed in peer coaching and they connected it with the good relationships that should exist between staff. One of the heads prepared a formal schedule of peer coaching in her/his school:

*I usually tell to my teachers 'do not stay in your classrooms, communicate with your colleagues, prepare a lesson together, do team teaching, go to other teachers' classrooms and observe them' (Head, School 3).*

Teachers confirmed the practice of peer coaching at their school and they highlighted that this strategy was helpful in enriching their teaching approaches. They had observed their colleagues teaching and after the observation they discussed that lesson. Peer coaching was a strategy that involved mainly the staff of each school and in which they had leading roles. Heads had a monitoring and supporting role during the implementation of this strategy:

*She gives many opportunities to teachers to get involved in team teaching and to develop peer-coaching. I think the teachers improved their teaching skills by collaborating and exchanging ideas (Deputy head, School 1).*

*She supports us a lot, we perform peer coaching very regularly. We enter in other classrooms and observe our colleagues teaching. It is a very helpful experience (Teacher 1, School 1).*

Concluding, peer-coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1995) is a strategy that was used by successful heads in enriching teachers' teaching capacity gave to teachers the opportunity to develop an active role in their professional growth, and at the same time, to learn together. However, it was not the emphasis of their practices. It is a rising strategy in the context of Cyprus. They know its dynamic and multi-dimensional results and they try to modify the school structures in order to fit to teachers. While the hierarchical structures of schools and the competitive climate are supported by the MOEC through the system of promotion, successful heads found ways to support teacher leadership (Little, 1990) by encouraging peer-coaching. In order to achieve that, they made certain arrangements to the programme so as to find time for teachers to visit each other in order to exchange experiences, ideas and methods of teaching (Smyth, 1991). These arrangements seemed to be useful in the development of 'collaboration' among the teachers, a theme that I discuss in the next section.

#### **5.3.1.4 Collaboration**

The forth strategy that successful heads used for the professional development of teachers was the creation of 'collaborative relationships' among the teachers in their schools. A number of heads strongly believed in collaboration and they promoted it among their staff in order to improve their teaching capacity. Collaboration in this study means that head teachers encouraged staff to work together, to exchange ideas

and discuss their teaching problems. In addition to that, they encouraged them to do curriculum planning together.

Collaboration is an issue that is very widely used in the literature for successful schools (Nias et al., 1989; Barth, 1990; Little, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994). Many researchers present findings that collaboration between teachers can help them improve their professional knowledge and understanding (Little, 1990; Slater, 2005). For example, Nias et al. (1989) argue that the founders of collaborative cultures are the heads of the schools. Lambert (2003) claims that as individuals work together, their personal identities begin to change, and for instance, teachers find more efficient ways to do their work.

In this study, two of the heads, a man and a woman, seemed to support collaborative planning in their schools. They encouraged their teachers to share ideas, materials and teaching methods. The constant communication and interaction of the staff on school goals and activities promoted learning and a safe school climate. In addition to that, the heads were not in the centre of the process, teachers were. As heads admitted they joined the teacher's teams regularly and they were just a team member.

According to the data, the teachers during 'the collaboration time' discussed and analysed the curriculum goals, wrote objectives and discussed ways to achieve them. In other words, they collaborated in order to plan their next steps together. Of course, these approaches seemed to be related to the quality of the teachers that work in the specific context for that certain period of time:

*... it is a fact that we do not know everything and if someone stays within in his/her shell his/her educational horizons will never open ... with*

*collaboration, communication and hard work we will improve ourselves and become better (Head, School 3).*

*A climate of collaboration exists in this school ... Generally, the teachers work as a team ... teachers are very responsible people and they exchange ideas and experiences. For example, the three first grades are working as one ... They collaborate and I feel happy for that (Head, School 7).*

Discussing this issue with teachers they claimed that collaboration had a strong impact on their professional growth because they built new knowledge together (Lambert, 1998). The teachers who participated in the collaborative activities constructed knowledge and a better understanding of their day-to-day work through the exchange of ideas, practices and the reflective discussion in a climate of mutual trust and respect:

*I collaborate with the teachers of the second grade ... I feel that there is mutual trust among us and this feeling helped me to be open to them and exchange ideas with them. I have been positively influenced but I think that I influence them too. I collaborate with my colleagues because I want to and I enjoy this collaboration (Teacher 2, School 7).*

*We are a small number of teachers in this school. We communicate and discuss what we do in our classrooms (Teacher 1, School 7).*

*He emphasizes on the collaboration among teachers of the same grade on an everyday basis. He always advises us to exchange ideas. Particularly, I collaborate very closely with the teacher of the second grade. We discuss the design of our lessons and as well as the curriculum planning (Teacher, School 8).*

Heads who promoted collaboration among staff and scheduled the school programme in such a way in order to give them time to collaborate. The structures of the Cyprus Educational System do not give the time for teachers to collaborate, so these heads made certain changes to the programme in order to find time for teachers, who taught parallel grades to meet, collaborate and develop their planning together. The heads who implemented this strategy, therefore, showed that they believed in the power of collaboration and did what was possible to support it among their staff.



*Our head encourages us to collaborate with our colleagues. Since the beginning of the year, she prepared a schedule for class coordination and collaboration. She tries to find ways and time to collaborate ... I think she tries a lot and this is the reason for her success (Teacher 1, School 3).*

Through further analysis of the data, it emerged that the successful heads who led the two small schools of the sample, succeeded in developing collaboration among their staff. The collaboration in those schools was developed within the school day during the free time of the staff. In contrast, the staff of the medium sized schools reported the limited existence of collaboration in their schools. The same picture was described at the big schools as well. Teachers at those schools reported that they collaborated with few teachers and especially with their head. The heads acted as a link between the teachers in large schools.

#### **5.3.1.5 Informed risk-taking**

The fourth practice of successful heads regarding the professional growth of teachers was in a form of encouragement to take informed risks (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Leithwood and Louis, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Hargreaves et al., 2001; Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie, 2003). This practice seemed to be connected to learning. All head teachers –two of them, a man and a woman, who put extra emphasis on this practice- appeared to stay close to their staff, encouraging them to experiment with new methods and to take new responsibilities. At the same time, they were close to teachers discussing their worries as far as the methods were concerned. In this respect, they showed that they cared about the personal and professional development of their teachers (Leithwood et al., 2006). Discussing this issue a little further with heads, they underlined that working in a competitive system of promotion, teachers needed to have high levels of performance in order to improve their careers. So, they believed

that one of their roles was to encourage their staff to take risks and to catch the opportunities that arise in schools:

*I want my teachers to know that whenever try new teaching methods I am by their side to make suggestions, or to discuss their worries. I think that they trust me and they use new teaching methods and techniques. I always support their efforts (Head, School 6).*

*Whenever a teacher needs support I tell him/her: 'Don't worry, I will be next to you to support you, I have resources available for you' ... I encourage them as much as I can and they are not afraid to be assigned further responsibilities (Head, School 3).*

*The head should support the persons who are responsible for initiatives ... to raise their self confidence, to give them the opportunities for self development and to identify their talents and special abilities (Head, School 9).*

A deputy head reported a similar opinion, when repeating the words of her head:

*I am sure that you are among the persons that are characterised by a high level of responsibility. Based on this belief I am sure that, this new school activity will materialise. I am sure that you are going to do the best you can in order to succeed. I know that you work hard (Deputy head, School 3).*

Teachers disclosed that their heads supported them to take risks regarding school issues. For example, they said:

*Our head has many talents and one of them is to support us, to encourage us and to help us when we need him (Teacher 1, School 5).*

*It is important for me to be supported by my head. Whenever we face a behaviour or a teaching problem she is ready to help us (Teacher 2, School 6).*

In general, encouraging risk-taking was a common practice of all the heads. Although, they acknowledged the possibility that their teachers might experience a failure, they supported them in using trial and error technique in order to improve their practice. By taking risks in their jobs teachers had the chance to have new experiences and to build new knowledge (Leithwood and Louis, 1998; Lingard et al., 2003). Whilst

heads showed caring for the professional development of their staff during the period of time they worked at their school –teachers rotate schools regularly-, at the same time they showed care for their personal development from a long term perspective. They encouraged them to take risks in order to improve their practice, focusing on their future career development.

#### **5.3.1.6 Capacity building**

The fifth strategy that the successful heads used to promote professional growth in their schools was that of capacity building (Beck and Murphy, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Day, 2007; Giles, 2007). Capacity building in this study is defined as ‘the interplay between personal abilities, interpersonal relationships, and organizational cultures’ (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000:11). From this definition it is derived that capacity building processes differ from school to school and from context to context. Beck and Murphy (1996), after an in-depth investigation of a school, found that capacity building included the acknowledgement of teachers’ needs and the provision of opportunities for professional growth. Day (2007) suggests a more comprehensive understanding of capacity building after studying a successful head in challenging circumstances. He argues that heads follow processes that acknowledge teachers’ emotions, values, renew teaching passion and give opportunities to their staff to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Heads in this study, by using building capacity processes attempted to maximise the diverse qualities of others, enabled them to take action in their area of expertise (Riley and MacBeath, 1998; Franey, 2002). Some of the heads seemed to have the abilities to identify and utilise the right skills and talents of each of their staff. By encouraging

people to expand their talents and special abilities they developed a great dynamic which provided multiple benefits for the school, the students and the teachers. Particularly, they helped teachers to engage in activities that satisfy them, they turned teachers' special skills to the school's advantage and teachers had a good opportunity to show their talents to the school inspector. They placed teachers at the centre of development, and therefore, they created a greater opportunity for improving the knowledge and skills of their staff. The following quotations illustrate the beliefs that heads had about promoting teachers' talents:

*The head teachers should 'use' the skills of their teachers for the benefit of their school. The 'discovery' of teachers' special talents and abilities is a difficult task for the head. The 'use' of their talents provides opportunities for school improvement and for their own personal promotion. As a head I try to channel all my teachers' abilities into school's advantage. In this way, I have the feeling that I did my best to help my teachers' professional growth (Head, School 9).*

*My main concern is to know my teachers. I have the intention to give opportunities to every single teacher in order to meet his/her interests, talents and hobbies. This will help him/her to be distinguished. I expect his/her talents to be acknowledged by the other teachers, the students, the parents, the community and the inspector (Head, School 1).*

Six of the heads also identified the special abilities and talents of parents and students at their schools (Beck and Murphy, 1996). In this sense, they ensured that individual and collective learning lead to the fundamental purpose of school, to improve the quality of students learning:

*I accept diversity, I accept other people as they are and utilize their talents. I encourage my teachers, my students and parents. I give them motives and I try to improve their self-image (Head, School 2).*

The ability of heads to identify the special talents at each of their staff seemed to have positive effects on their motivation, job satisfaction, their self-esteem and they renewed their passion for teaching:

*She gives us opportunities to show our talents. She turns to school benefit the special abilities and talents of each member of the staff. For example, a teacher who is specialized in maths has the opportunity to teach and the rest of the teachers to observe him/her. I think that the head has the abilities to bring out our talents (Teacher 2, School 1).*

In general, successful heads were the key persons to identifying the talents of teachers. They provided everyone with multiple opportunities for involvement in school activities and activated their special skills. In this sense, the teachers could assist and be assisted by each other in order to help others and themselves to improve their performance and increase motivation. By and large, building capacity for staff development meant that successful heads extended teachers potential, gave them opportunities to 'lead' and to work, as referred to above, collaboratively.

#### **5.3.1.7 Induction of novice teachers**

In addition to the above, the sixth strategy that successful heads used for the professional growth of teachers was related to novice teachers. As referred at the beginning of this section, few heads paid particular attention to the trouble free induction of novice teachers. Particularly, they helped novice teachers to improve their teaching abilities. Heads seemed to listen to teachers' problems regarding teaching and learning and they tried to work together to find solutions. Some teachers underlined:

*During the first two years at this school I was a novice teacher. She helped me to be improved and to become a 'real teacher'. I observed her teaching mathematics at a second grade for a long period of time. In this way, I think I developed my teaching abilities, I learned how to organize my lessons and how to keep my students quiet (Teacher 1, School 3).*

Additionally, a head highlighted that novice teachers needed to be supported by the more experienced teachers in the school:

*Novice teachers might have a lot of theoretical background but they have no experience in teaching. It is difficult for them to teach in a contemporary manner, they feel more comfortable to present a lesson in a lecture style [class teaching]. Imagine, I am almost 60 years old and I have to help young teachers in order to be efficient with their students. There is long distance between theory and practice (Head, School 5).*

In addition to the professional growth of novice teachers, most of the heads were concerned about the trouble free induction of new-comer teachers into the school culture. Due to the policy of teacher rotation, every year there was at least one new-comer teacher in their school. According to the data the new-comers needed time to adapt to the new school environment. In this sense, successful heads aimed to help new-comers to feel comfortable in order to perform satisfactorily. The following quote shows their concerns:

*New-comers have usually different teaching styles compared to the style predetermined in our school. For this reason, I attempt to help them use student centred teaching methods, as well as the use of technology in teaching (Head, School 8).*

The above argument was also supported by the staff of the schools. The staff presented their experiences about the attempts of their heads, to help new-comer teachers have a smooth induction.

*Our head was very understanding. He did not make me feel uncomfortable or under stress when I was in a new environment, in a new class with new students and new responsibilities. He was very helpful (Deputy head, School 7).*

*Our head teacher undertakes the role to help newcomers to familiarise themselves with the school ... the new teachers that come in our school are usually absorbed by the team because we are tied up, we always collaborate (Teacher 1, School 3).*

It is of high importance that heads showed care for the professional maturity of their staff, either as new-comers or as novice teachers (Chapman et al., 2008). They stayed close to them by advising, supporting and helping them. In this way, they helped them

to adjust easily to the school culture by communicating with them the school goals and purposes. This strategy was activated only when new comers or novice teachers are presented to their schools.

#### **5.3.1.8 Provision of resources**

The seventh strategy that a number of successful heads used for improving the professional growth of their teachers was the provision of resources. In particular, they developed a teaching material tank by using their own teaching material and in collaboration with their teachers have enriched it through the years. The purpose of this kind of tank was to help teachers in designing their lesson plans, to help them save time and make them feel secure at least on one dimension of the multi-dimensional teaching processes. They could refer to it and use it in designing their lesson plans. A head said about this:

*The use made of the material I have in the curriculum tank depends on the teachers. They can apply it as it is or they can change it. My aim is the enrichment of the teaching material in order to help them. For example, the young teachers do not know a lot about projects and this tank will help them. I always propose to them to do small projects. In this way, they help students to be creative (Head, School 5).*

#### **5.3.1.9 Utilization of teachers' meetings**

Finally, the last strategy that successful heads used for promoting the professional growth of their staff was related to teachers' meetings. They utilized the teachers' meetings in order to promote professional growth (Hoerr, 2005). The evidence showed that they ensured that the meetings of teachers focused on learning. Although the formal time of teachers' meetings in the Cyprus Educational System was limited, heads used a repertoire of activities in order to help their staff improve. They presented themes that they believed suited their teachers' needs or they invited

specialist from the external environment to present themes that were related to students needs and teachers interests:

*Teachers have many opportunities for professional growth in the teachers meetings. I do present some educational issues that I think are useful (Head, School 1).*

Further, they tried to turn to the schools advantage, the special skills of teachers. They presented teachers' innovative and fresh ideas to the rest of the teachers.

*Every time I come across an innovative idea given by my teachers I ask them to present it to the rest of the team during a teachers meeting. Actually this is a kind of encouragement and at the same time his/ her ideas and thoughts are spread to the other teachers. I usually say to my teachers 'We are 20 people in this meeting, if each one of us gives at least one idea, until the end of the school year we will enrich our teaching repertoire with ideas that we have never thought about (Head, School 8).*

In conclusion, the emphasis on teachers' professional growth was only one piece of the puzzle which constructs the profile of successful heads in the Cyprus Educational System. Heads seemed to develop a range of strategies in order to improve the teaching capacity of their teachers. Despite the difficulties they tackled, they moved beyond the managerial view of their role (Day et al., 2000). They put into practice strategies and practices that they had learned throughout their career. For most of them, the promotion of professional growth in their schools was a conscious decision. They placed great emphases on the strategies of modelling teaching, making suggestions about teaching and the curriculum, giving feedback, supporting, and risk taking, providing opportunities for capacity building and offering the appropriate resources. They also shared roles with teachers like peer coaching in which teachers had a leading role. While they set specific strategies for teachers' professional growth, they were close to them and to day-to-day practices. Finally, successful heads have shown care for both, the professional and the personal growth of their staff.



Successful heads found to select carefully the strategies for teachers development. First, they had accessed their teachers' needs and then proceeded with a specific plan for staff development strategies. These strategies were integrated into the regular practices of teachers and it was closely connected to the schools' curriculum. Consequently, there was a differentiation among the schools regarding strategies used by heads for teachers' professional growth.

Previous research has highlighted the promotion of professional growth among staff from their heads (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Stoll and Fink, 1995; Southworth, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Gurr et al., 2003; Leithwood et al. 2006). All these studies emphasize that the promotion of teachers' professional development is the most influential leadership practice in primary schools. A study conducted in the U.S.A. by Blase and Blase (1998), for instance, with more than 800 teachers involved, demonstrated that good heads (principals) expanded their teachers' teaching range with only carefully designed support and assistance. They found a set of strategies used by heads: making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling, using enquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, provide capacity building and succession planning. Likewise, Webb's (2005) qualitative study in six primary schools showed that the central role of a primary school head teacher was to provide leadership that brought about continual improvement in teaching (and learning).

Similar results were described by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) in a review of 32 research studies. They identified four central elements in leaders' practices and one of them was the 'people development'. Analysing this dimension of leadership

Leithwood et al. (2006) claim that it is one of the 'core' successful leadership practices, and it is valuable in almost all contexts. According to them, heads offer intellectual stimulation, provide individualized support and present an appropriate model.

Without a doubt, the most critical factor in the development of professional growth in schools is the leadership of the head. The findings from this study revealed a partially similar picture to the international research presented above. They convincingly indicate successful heads model, coach, provide opportunities for teachers, support, encourage collaboration, care for the personal and professional development of teachers and promote capacity building and succession planning in their schools.

However, in contrast with the international studies the learning environment in the Cypriot schools seemed to have developed in a short period of time-due to the policy of rotating head teachers. Heads in this study activated processes right after their appointment at a school. The period of their adjustment in the new environment seemed to be short, so as to 'make the most of' the time being at school. They sought to increase learning, to improve teachers teaching and eventually to lead to school improvement. Further, successful heads were aware at the beginning of every school year, to integrate into the school culture either novice or new teachers (experienced teachers who were newly appointed at their school). They spent valuable time arranging this. In research with four secondary schools, Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman and White (2003) described heads succession and regular rotation in Ontario schools. They claimed that 'schools that are making progress will backslide if their principals leave too early. Keeping strong principals in increasingly successful

schools ensures that improvement will stick' (p. 84). Therefore, successful heads need to stay at a school for a longer period of time in order to ensure the schools success.

Although heads in the Cyprus Educational System do not have any obligation to improve their teachers' capacity, the successful heads in this study showed great commitment to their job and the students' learning. Their attempts to develop teachers' have been clearly based on intuition and on their personal experiences. The recent initial training programmes for head teachers (there is no any other in-service education programme for heads) mainly focuses on the managerial aspect of headship rather on the leadership. Therefore, there is a need in the educational system for a head teacher's development programme, which would help them to improve and enrich their staff development strategies and to consistently include the emerging strategies of the study in the schools' day-to-day practices. It is within these kinds of studies that the education programmes of primary head teachers in Cyprus need to be examined.

A clear message gained from this section, is that the successful heads in this study followed a learning-centred leadership approach. Alongside of the constraints from the system, they included professional development for teachers in their repertoire of practices. These practices were not as a result of heads' initial or in service education and were not a 'must' by the MOEC. It seems to have derived from their deep commitment and passion for their work and the deep love for children. However, a number of studies have also found a link between leadership and students learning (Joyce and Showers, 1995; Mulford, 2005; Robinson, 2007; Day et al., 2008a); a theme that will be discussed in the next section.

In this section the discussion has been related to the attempts of the successful head teachers, in this study, to encourage the professional growth of their staff. In the next section I will analyze the way successful heads promoted and ensured students learning.

### **5.3.2 Students learning**

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data analysis - under the theme of understanding and developing people - was the ability of successful heads to promote students' learning (Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Stoll et al., 2003; Møller, Eggen, Fuglestad, Langfeldt, Presthus, Skrøvset, Stjernstrøm and Vedøy, 2005; Day et al., 2008a) (see Table 5.5: Focus on students learning). According to the research review of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) successful school leaders make an important contribution to the improvement of students learning. Moving a step forward Leithwood and his colleagues (2006) underline that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on students learning.

In this study student learning involved working together with teachers in areas that were related to the analysis of school goals, the approaches of teaching and learning, and the effective communication of heads' values and expectations. All the heads claimed that in their priorities as new heads, was the control of students' behaviour, the improvement of students discipline in doing their homework, and at the same time, to set high expectations for students and teachers. The majority of the heads in collaboration with teachers, parents and students developed a code of practice. In this code indicated the acceptable behaviour at school and the possible consequences of

students’ actions. They also developed a communication book with each student in order to improve day-to-day school communication with parents. In this way, they established a continuous communication between school and home:

*My teachers and I have decided to reach parents, to find ways to bring them closer to school. We did the first step. We showed our intentions for collaboration in parents meetings, in school events. We adopted a strategy of direct and indirect communication with them (Head, School 2).*

		Focus on students learning									
Cases		1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Heads' Strategies											
	Monitoring students learning	✓**	✓	✓**	✓*	✓**	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Caring for academic-social goals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓	
	Being visible	✓*	✓*	✓*	-	✓	✓	✓*	✓	-	
	Protection of teaching time	-	-	✓*	✓*	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	
	Praising students	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓*	✓	
	Creating a learning environment	✓*	✓*	✓**	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*	✓	

Table 5.5: Focus on students learning

In this section, I will discuss several of the strategies that successful heads in Cyprus used for promoting students’ learning. These strategies were related with the monitoring of school goals and the progress of students; their visibility in the schools’ area, the protection of teaching time from external factors and finally they aimed to create a learning environment for students and teachers. In this learning environment they seemed to get together with teachers and parents high expectations for the students (see Table 5.5: Focus on students learning). As discussed in Chapter two, there are no tests in primary schools which could facilitate the comparison of the achievement of students at these schools.

### 5.3.2.1 Monitoring students' learning

The first strategy that heads used in the promotion of student learning was to monitor the success of the schools goals (Blase and Blase, 1998). According to Southworth (1998) monitoring is a central task of heads, which includes the collection of evidence and information that enables them and their colleagues to evaluate students' progress. In this study, all of the heads used monitoring as a tool to ensure that school goals were translated into classroom practice. They managed to do that by visiting classrooms, by discussing with their staff, by encouraging them to visit places in the community connected to their teaching subject, by monitoring their curriculum planning and by testing students. As it was noted earlier (in the section on professional growth), they regularly visited classrooms, formally or informally (being visible) in order to monitor teachers teaching as well as the implementation of the school goals. Heads cared strongly about the improvement of their students and especially those coming from low SES families (see Chapter 2). However, all the actions of heads were the result of close collaboration with their teachers and the development of a deep dialogue and analysis of each students-case. In this sense, they regularly discussed with their staff about the progress of each individual child and the possible ways of helping him/her. It was obvious that they recognized how to spend their time by focusing on school priorities:

*He focuses on learning and cares for the success of school objectives. He always reminds us of the school objectives especially during teacher's meetings. We discuss and analyse them in smaller groups. These simpler goals help us to better design our lesson plans (Teacher 2, School 7).*

*He regularly comes informally in our classrooms ... he observes our activities ... in a way he monitors the success of school goals (Teacher 1, School 5).*

*At the beginning of the school year we set the school objectives ... he always reminds us of the school goals ... he regularly inquires about our class results (Teacher 1, School 7).*

Heads were concerned with students learning, so they regularly monitored their progress. The monitoring information came from their personal contact with students and by testing them.

### **5.3.2.2 Caring for the success of academic and social goals**

The second strategy that successful heads developed to increase student learning was their caring about the achievement of academic and social goals (Sergiovanni, 2001a; Gurr et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007). Along with visiting classrooms and discussing with their staff the students' achievement, the strategy of testing students' achievement was also reiterated in successful heads' repertoire. Although there were not any governmental tests that identified the students' achievement level, two female and two male successful heads, did their own tests. They considered testing as a way of diagnosing students' weaknesses, to evaluate students' achievement levels, to monitor their progress and generally, to examine the successfulness of academic goals. By detecting the success of academic goals they understood students' needs and developed school priorities (Southworth, 1998):

*Last year I gave a test to all the children of the school in order to evaluate them. I spent many hours to correct the tests. I did that test based on the logic that: if I do not know the achievement level of my students I will know nothing of them ... This year we know the needs of our students and we have set our priorities, e.g. text comprehension (Head, School 6).*

Staff also supported the argument that heads tested students in order to check the level of academic goals:

*Once a year she gives a test to all children. Last year, she personally corrected all the tests both in Math and in Greek language, in order to*

*have a personal opinion on every child. In this way, the difficulties and the advantages of each classroom emerge (Deputy head, School 6).*

Head teachers had a significant role in this part of the school life. They informed teachers and parents of the test results. Most of them used the test results, in collaboration with their teachers, for setting goals in order to help students as they had a broad vision of students learning. Although testing was not in the head teachers' duties - according to the MOEC -, heads used it as one of their practices in order to help their students improve their achievement level. In this respect, parents seemed to be satisfied with their attempts:

*She gives her own test to the children in order to have an opinion on their achievement level. As my children tell me, the child who gets full marks in the test is thought by his/her classmates that she/he is the best and she/he tries harder to be the best student. She always does whatever is needed in order to help the students (Parent, School 3).*

*The head once in a while tests the level of achievement of our children and he might call us up at home. He will tell us 'I gave a test in maths in your son's classroom but your son did not score a good grade, what happened?' (Parent, School 5).*

Based on test results heads advised parents and students:

*She discusses with us our children's improvement. She advises us on how to help our children improve their achievement and their behaviour (Parent, School 2).*

*She organised students meetings in order to tell us the areas that we need to study harder so as to become better (Student, School 2).*

Although by testing students, successful heads showed that academic goals were important to them, while at the same time paying attention to social goals:

*The priority is on values rather than on the knowledge ... is that children will develop certain attitudes and certain values that will boost their self-esteem and the develop further their self-efficacy (Head, School 7).*

*We should develop the idea of life-long learning in the minds of our students. This will help them improve later in their lives (Head, School 10).*



Students acknowledged and supported the argument that their heads and teachers put special effort into the achievement of social goals:

*The staff helps us a lot and the head organizes very nice events for us. We do not study only lessons in this school. We do different activities like music activities/ events, sport games and we collaborate with the schools of our neighbourhood. These make us happy* (Student, School 2).

*She gives us opportunities through the different events to show our talents* (Student, School 2).

At the same time parents also seemed to confirm that the school achieved its goals:

*The head and teachers work hard but silently, they do not care to show their work outside the school, not even to parents. I believe that they do very good work with our children* (Parent, School 7).

The successful heads in this study seemed to focus not only on academic goals but also on social goals. They cared about their students' academic and social achievement. Therefore, with their students needs in mind they provided opportunities for them –through school activities- to show their abilities.

### **5.3.2.3 Being visible**

The third strategy that successful heads used to promote students learning is by being visible in the school (MacBeath, 1998). Blase and Blase (1998) found that good heads were those who wandered around (i.e. being visible), made informal visits to classrooms, observed student-teacher interactions and provided feedback. In this study, the term 'being visible' has a broader meaning in the sense that successful heads had direct conduct with students inside and outside classrooms. Particularly, they had frequent conduct with students through teaching. All of them spent at least 30 per cent (2/7) of their time to teaching duties. They also met students in the

playground, in the corridors as they walked around, and during their visits to the classrooms. They made themselves available and accessible to students to discuss issues of concern (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Blase and Blase, 1998). Visibility increased informal interactions between the head and students as well as with teachers. This type of communication gave information to the heads about their students' learning level or their emotional status, and they had the chance to communicate their vision and ideas with students and staff:

*She teaches all classes, and everyday passes by all classrooms. She knows all the students of the school by their name and all of them have a kind of personal relationship with her ... she is always in touch with them (Teacher 2, School 6).*

A deputy head supported the argument that the teaching time was very important for the heads to be close to their students:

*I think is her teaching experience that makes her successful ... she enjoys teaching and this is a fact that keeps her close to the students (Deputy head, School 9).*

Students felt that they had a special relationship with their heads. The evidence showed that the heads aims were to be around the school and have discussions with students and teachers:

*She is the only head I have met so far who attempts to improve the school yard facilities so that we play better and safer. Sometimes she comes in the yard during breaks and she tells us stories about the games she played in the school yard when she was a young girl. She is a very very good head (Student, School 6).*

The practice of being visible helped successful heads to have a deeper understanding of the needs of students and teachers. It was used as a practice for diagnosis and as a practice of support, encouragement and praise of teachers and students in order to encourage them to work harder and to focus on learning. These heads seemed to be influenced by their long career as teachers, since they invested a large amount of time on their relationship with students. They had direct contact with students inside and

outside of the classrooms. They also showed that they did not only care about students learning but also about their well being. In contrast, international research that was conducted in four countries, showed that in the countries in which heads spent time teaching, students felt that they were closer to them, than in the countries in which heads did not have teaching duties (Dempster and Logan, 1998; Reeves Moos and Forrest, 1998a).

#### **5.3.2.4 Protection of teaching time**

The fourth strategy that successful heads used in promoting the quality of learning in their schools was the protection of teaching - learning time by acted like a buffer (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Blase and Blase, 1998; Hallinger, 2003). It was connected to their attempts to keep out of school activities, in order to minimize distraction (e.g. participation in an art competition, participation in an essay competition, participation at local celebrations, parents interventions). Their aim was to maximize the interaction time between students and teachers. The following quotes, shows the concerns that successful heads about protecting teaching - learning time:

*He respects the teaching time. He is sensitive regarding the smooth flow of school's day-to-day activities. He prefers students to continue their lessons and not to divert their attention (Deputy head, School 8).*

*One of his primary aims is to spend the students' school time in a qualitative way. He expects students to benefit from all the school activities and events (Teacher 1, School 10).*

Parents also seemed to acknowledge the attempts of their heads to improve learning in different ways:

*She always puts a lot of effort to enrich our children's diversity of experiences regarding learning (Parent, School 3).*

Heads acted as a buffer (MacBeath, 1998; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007) to their schools and especially to their teachers when people from the schools external environment threatened to disturb the calmness of the teachers and the school climate. A large number of teachers and deputy heads, during their interviews, emphasized the way in which their heads faced these difficult situations:

*She always supports her teachers ... she supports us regarding the problems we have in school either with parents, the inspector ... (Teacher 2, School 1).*

*Many times parents visit her office in a very aggressive mood and finally left the school premises very calm and satisfied (Deputy head, School 3).*

Discussing this issue with a mother, she stressed the significance of the role of their head teacher in stopping parents' interventions:

*Prior to his appointment as a head in our school, I think that the school had a serious problem with parents' interventions in school activities. During the last two years, based on the letters received from the school, it is obvious that everyone in school knows his/her position. He has demands and regulations for both the school and the parents (Parent, School 8).*

When the teachers were asked to describe their feelings regarding their protection from interventions, coming from the external environment, they made it clear that there was a climate of security in their school.

*We feel that she is there for us and we feel security (Teacher 2, School 3)*

*We feel a great feeling of security at the school. There are many incidents with parents but she keeps her position strongly; we feel very secure (Teacher 1, School 1).*

*We always feel like we are in a secure port (Teacher 2, School 6).*

Successful heads seemed to protect teaching time from external and internal factors. Their first priority seemed to be the students and their learning, trying to keep possible distractions (e.g. Ministry officers, parents' complains) outside of school.

### 5.3.2.5 Praising students

The data demonstrated that all successful heads in the study, supported students morally by giving them motives to improve their achievement as well as their behaviour. Particularly, most of the head teachers supported students publicly or privately by using verbal praise and several of them seemed to be more demonstrative and used verbal or written praise and external motives. A head teacher that seemed to be very enthusiastic about this practice said:

*We try some positive motives. I praise students who develop initiatives. I invite them to my office and praise them ... I give to them a souvenir. I give souvenirs even to the children with behavioural problems. I avoid negative reinforcement and punishment ... more emphasis is given to positive reinforcement (Head, School 9).*

Similar opinions on this issue were expressed by many teachers. Teachers reported that their heads regularly praise or support students. This kind of support seemed to increase students' motivation to study harder in their lessons:

*Every time the head comes in our classroom she finds something good to say in order to support us. In my point of view, this is very good for us. The young children feel motivated and they work harder (Teacher 2, School 3).*

The students gave similar views:

*Our head says 'bravo' (well done) ... She feels very proud of us every time we study our lessons ... succeed in sports ... have an excellent behaviour. She praises us in our classrooms or during the students' meetings (Student, School 1).*

In the same vein parents also reported that their children were repeatedly supported by their heads:

*My son comes from the school very happy. He seems to praise students on a regular basis because my son refers to those awards and praises (Parent, School 10).*

As discussed above, successful heads were also very generous in supporting students. Praise and encouragement were common practices. The heads' responsibility to set the number of teaching hours, as well as their practice to move around the school, gave them the chance to be closer to students to monitor their behaviour and actions and to give them the appropriate support. In contrast, an international multi-perspective study which explored approaches to leadership in four countries, found that students wanted more support from their heads in order to be motivated (Moos, Mahony and Reeves, 1998). At the same time, Danish and English heads complained that they were losing contact with students (Reeves et al., 1998).

#### **5.3.2.6 Creating a learning environment**

The last strategy that successful heads used to promote learning, was their attempt to create a learning environment in their schools which included everybody (Nias et al., 1989; Southworth, 2000). It was a strategy that was embedded in the day-to-day life of schools. All school activities and decisions were closely related to the construction of a learning environment. Heads seemed to implicitly influence their teachers and students learning, by using several ways of supporting the development of a learning environment which would lead to the construction of a 'culture of learning'. They encouraged the use of technology in lesson planning or they encouraged a variety of activities inside and outside their school. For example, they encouraged visiting places outside of the school within their community or they encouraged parents with special interests to visit the school and make presentations to students. This also established a climate of collaboration with the community and parents:

*Successful teaching and learning in this school is achieved through the development of a rich learning environment, the development of an atmosphere full of a diversity of activities, the use of contemporary teaching approaches and the use of new technologies (Head, School 7).*

*One of my emphases is to provide the right resources to my teachers in order to help them work in comfort, and to put their profession over the unionism (Head, School 1).*

Teachers confirmed the attempts of their heads:

*He encourages teachers to use innovative ways of teaching to use new techniques, new pedagogical approaches in order to achieve better teaching results ... Yes he will be there to support us to help us (Teacher1, School 5).*

A deputy head who was a new comer at a school, stated that she was impressed by the learning environment that existed in her school:

*I was appointed at this school last year. At the beginning I felt panic because I was in a new environment. All the teachers were using a lot of pictures, creative activities, new ideas and they were enthusiastic about teaching (Deputy head, School 7).*

Students and parents seemed to support the argument that their teachers and heads focused on their learning, and they tried to do their best for them in school. Their quotes give the message that they felt very proud of what they achieved together:

*Our school is one of the best schools in Cyprus regarding learning; our teachers always focus on our education. We are a very distinguished school (Student, School 6).*

*I think that the qualities of our head who is a low profile person inspire teachers and students. My son returns from the school very calm; he is never stressed. This year his behaviour and achievement are much better than last year at the pre-school. Every morning he goes to school with great zest and I feel happy about my child's improvement (Parent, School 7).*

*Her speeches, during the parents' meetings or school events, show that she is a deep thinking person. She seems to care about the learning of our children (Parent, School 2).*

*The teachers are good. My teacher always tries her best: to decorate our classroom and to post on the sign-board our creativities. The teachers of our school always help us with our lessons' problems. Many times they stay in the classroom during break time in order to help us (Student, School 6).*

The learning environment of the schools was also improved by setting high expectations (Southworth, 1998; Day et al., 2000). Whatever the school context, the head teachers had high expectations of their teachers and especially from their students. They followed an inclusive approach in their leadership, in which they cared for the level of learning and achievement of each student. This dimension of their leadership was persistent and consistent. Most of them communicated their beliefs regarding high expectations during teachers' and parents meetings, students' assemblies, and in their everyday conduct with students and teachers:

*The school has high expectations. We have crystal clear objectives which we discuss; we inform each other (Head, School 2).*

*She puts high expectations for the school ... She has demands and high expectations as a person and as a head, so she raises the educational level of the school higher (Deputy head, School 1).*

*She sometimes asks us difficult questions and problems but after I think for a while and I find the answer (Student, School 3).*

Largely, the promotion of students learning was a significant practice of heads in the Cypriot educational environment. Successful heads appeared to care for their students' learning and they collaborated with teachers and parents in order to enhance the academic and social goals of their schools. They insisted on students' achievement by monitoring students' learning, by knowing their educational needs, by focusing on learning, by protecting teaching time and by making themselves available to students. Along with that in collaboration with all the stakeholders, they created a learning and safe environment which inspired everybody to work harder. There was, therefore, a widespread belief among heads, teachers and parents that students achieved school goals (e.g. academic and social).



Previous research has highlighted the contribution of successful heads to the students' learning (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Gurr et al., 2005). A study conducted in the U.S.A., for instance, has demonstrated that heads promoted a positive school learning climate (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). School learning climate, refers along with the professional development to: (a) protecting instructional time, (b) maintaining high visibility (c) developing and enforcing academic standards (d) providing incentives for learning. Similar results were described by Hallinger and Heck (1998) in a review of 42 studies in eleven countries of school leadership and student achievement. They found that successful head teachers influenced school and classroom processes and they had a direct impact on student learning. Likewise, Leithwood and Reihl (2003) in a review of qualitative research about successful leadership, concluded that successful school leadership made important contributions to the improvement of students learning. The findings of this study revealed a similar picture. Despite the contextual differences, successful head teachers in the Cyprus Educational System created the appropriate circumstances to increase learning by influencing students either directly or indirectly. Their long experience as teachers seemed to motivate them to care personally for the improvement of each individual student.

So far, I have discussed two of the three sub-themes from the 'Understanding and developing people'. In the next section I will explain the third sub-theme which is 'Person-centred leadership approaches' (see also Table 5.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

### 5.3.3 Person-centred leadership approaches

The provision of developing person-centred approaches was another practice that successful Cypriot heads used in order to create the conditions for building a learning and healthy environment for students and teachers. In this study, person - centred approaches seemed to be related to the practices of developing relationships with people (Hallinger and Heck, 1999; Day et al., 2000; Hallinger, 2003). Teachers, and especially students, were the centre of the interest for heads. All their actions were targeted at the learning and welfare of teachers and students.

#### 5.3.3.1 Relationships

Despite the impersonal character that the Educational System of Cyprus promoted, the most important aspect of all successful heads was to develop and maintenance and sustain excellent relationships with staff, students, stakeholders and parents (Nias et al., 1989; Day et al., 2000; Fullan, 2002). As reported in the section on values beliefs and vision, the heads qualities of integrity, kindness, honesty, fairness, trust and respect were at the core for the generation of relationships with everybody around them in order to set the schools direction. These relationships had been built by communicating at a personal level, solving problems, explaining misunderstandings, caring and giving support in order for everybody to learn in a safe environment:

*There is absolute respect to their (teachers) personalities, opinions and needs. I perceive them as human beings, not only as professionals ... they have paid me back fivefold (Head, School 6).*

*A leader in order to be successful needs to develop a healthy communication with all the people that are related to school: teachers, parents, stakeholders and the people from the district. So my leadership is based ... on good interpersonal relationships that I have developed with stakeholders, my teachers, parents and students (Head, School 8).*

*I seek parents' collaboration in order to promote the school's goals. I expect from them to collaborate at all levels of school processes in order*

*to help students to enjoy a better school life. We are associates and if we have conflicts the game is lost ... the school is open for the parents and I am happy when parents come closer to the school (Head, School 10).*

The teachers gave similar views on this issue paying attention to the head's day-to-day relationship with teachers and students:

*She is in conduct with children, she discusses their problems with them ... she helps the teachers with the problems they face in their classrooms (Deputy head, School 6).*

*He is very calm with everybody ... he solves any problematic situation immediately and personally. He tries to solve directly any misunderstanding or any situation of conflict between colleagues (Teacher 2, School 10).*

A deputy head supported the argument that heads developed a healthy relationship with parents in order to help them understand the schools vision and solve their children's problems:

*She spends a lot of time with parents who visit her ... she spends this time talking, discussing with them and explaining things to them (Deputy head, School 9).*

Similar opinions were expressed by parents and students underlining that their heads were sensitive to their needs, they respected them as people, and they intended to stay constantly close to their problems:

*Many times I had personal communication with the head because my daughter had some problems with a child in her classroom ... I am pleased; I am very pleased with teachers ... They continually collaborate with students and parents. All the school staff sends off positive energy (Parent, School 3).*

*The head collaborates with the parents association. He appreciates the services we provide and we collaborate in all school activities. He is a very positive person and his door of his office is always open for us (Parents, School 8).*

*She is a very good head. She is the only head I have met so far who attempts to improve the school yard facilities so that we play better and safer. Sometimes she comes in the yard during breaks and she tells us*

*stories about the games she played in the school yard when she was a young girl. She is a very very good head* (Student, School 6).

In addition to the above, the successful heads made positive comments to their staff and they were very tactful with negative comments:

*Our head has a unique way of making comments, that nobody feels embarrassed* (Deputy head, School 3).

*He never criticizes our work in front of other teachers. He calls us in his office and he speaks to us privately. This is a very good practice because he makes us trust him* (Teacher 1, School 5).

Further, analyzing the data it emerged that there were differences among the practices of heads concerning the development of relationships. These differences were related to the school size as well as the school SES. The heads who led small schools had developed stronger person-centred approaches unlike their colleagues who led bigger schools. In small schools heads had a closer relationship with their staff and students. They had the opportunity to know all of the students by name, to meet the parents, and at the same time, to be well informed about the students' achievement level. Further, heads who led low SES schools acknowledged that they paid particular attention to students that needed psychological or economical support. They tried to be closer to the families that faced serious problems and to help them to find the best solutions for their children. So, headship in this study has a contingent nature as school leaders adopted different strategies of leadership in different contexts.

Successful heads in this study viewed leadership as person centred rather than task centred. In general, all the themes that emerged from this study were pervaded by the person-centred approach, despite the managerial and impersonal character of the hierarchical system. The heads were concerned with the happiness, the welfare, the

safety and the improvement of all people who were connected to the school. They also supported this humanitarian environment by expressing caring. As we have already discussed, they showed love and friendship to people around them. At the same time they set the directions for the school goals and vision.

Some other researches reached the same conclusions (Nias et al., 1989; Lambert, 1998; Beatty, 2000; Slater, 2005). For example, a study conducted in England concluded that all successful heads 'are above all, people-centred' (Day et al., 2000:167). Likewise, in a four country study, results showed that good leaders recognised the importance of relationships (Riley and MacBeath, 1998). Similar results were described by Day and Leithwood (2007) in a seven country multi-perspective study. The findings of this study are in consistency with the findings of international research, although with contextual differences. Primarily, personal communication and relationships were distinct qualities of successful leadership practices.

So far, I have discussed the first part of the cross case analysis, in particular I have explained in detail the two themes 'Leading morally and emotionally' and 'Understanding and developing people' (Table 5.6: Summary Table: Themes, sub-themes and patterns). In the following section I will discuss Table 5.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationships and barriers

Summary Table: themes, sub-themes and patterns	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5.2 Leading morally and emotionally</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Values , beliefs and vision</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Communication abilities</li> <li>b. Trust and respect</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>2. Moral support and care</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Moral support</li> <li>b. Care</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>3. Emotional understanding</b></li> </ol>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5.3 Understanding and developing people</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Promoting teachers' professional growth</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Modelling</li> <li>b. Monitoring and mentoring</li> <li>c. Peer coaching</li> <li>d. Collaboration among teachers</li> <li>e. Risk taking</li> <li>f. Capacity building</li> <li>g. Induction of newcomers</li> <li>h. Providing resources</li> <li>i. Utilizations of meetings</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>2. Students learning</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Monitoring students learning</li> <li>b. Caring for academic-social goals</li> <li>c. Being visible</li> <li>d. Protection of the teaching time</li> <li>e. Praising students</li> <li>f. Creating a learning environment</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>3. Person-centred leadership</b></li> </ol>	

Table 5.6: Summary Table: Themes, sub-themes and patterns

## 5.4 Summary

Table 5.7 is a synopsis of the findings that have been discussed above and shows how the work of successful Cypriot heads ‘matches’ with the research literature, how they overcome the problems of context and at what extent; and where appropriate, how they are limited by the context. Specifically, Table 5.7 illustrates that: (a) Successful Cypriot heads were led by their values but at the same time they had to follow and apply the Ministry’s rules and regulations. They overcame this obstacle by finding a balance between personal values and the Ministry’s philosophy. They learned to stop at the point where the Ministry did not create any problems to them and their school. This finding is similar with the international findings in the Western countries (e.g. Australia, Finland, U.K., U.S.A.) (Day et al. 2000; Day and Leithwood, 2007). (b) Successful Cypriot heads provided moral support to teachers, students and parents by praising, encouraging, caring and thanking them. Despite the Ministry’s directions for value neutral headship, they overcame this barrier by taking personal risks (made choices). The findings at the international level are related to the above findings (Blase and Blase, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999). (c) Regardless the strict regulations and the Ministry’s directions for emotional control and suppression, Cypriot heads placed great emphasis on caring and emotional understanding for people around them. Heads developed abilities which helped them to escape from the Ministry’s emotion-neutral directions. These findings, again, agree with the international research findings (Noddings, 1992, 1998; Beatty, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003b). (d) Successful Cypriot heads promoted teachers’ professional growth even with no time provision. They re-arrange the school programme within the limits of Ministry’s regulations in order to find time for teachers’ collaboration. They encouraged and supported

teachers' professional growth and they created a learning environment for them. The findings of this research pointed to a rather similar picture with the findings of international research (Blase and Blase, 1998; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 2006). (e) Successful heads cared personally for students learning. Their long teaching experience helped in improving students learning. These findings echo the international research literature (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Gurr et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007). (f) At last, they adopted person-centred leadership approaches which were a strong quality of Cypriot heads. They were concerned with the happiness, the welfare and safety of people despite the rational aspect of schooling and its managerial character. These findings are in consistency with the findings of the international research but with greater intensity (Lambert, 1998; Day, 2000; Day and Leithwood, 2007).



**Summary Table**  
**Successful Cypriot heads: relationships and barriers (1)**

Successful Cypriot heads	Successful heads in literature (matches or not)	To what extent	How Cypriot heads overcome the problems	How they are limited by context
• Values-led (communication of their values-vision-beliefs, integrity, trust, respect)	Similar findings Values-led (Day et al. 2000; Day and Leithwood, 2007).	They stop at the point where the Ministry does not create any problems for them.	Found a balance between personal values and Ministry's philosophy.	They have to apply the Ministry's rules and regulations.
• Moral support (praise, encourage, thank, acknowledge hard work, were available to people)	Similar findings (Blase and Blase, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999).	They even recommended teachers good job to their inspectors.	Take personal risks.	Values neutral directions.
• Care	Similar findings (Noddings, 1992, 2001).	Place great emphasis on caring.	Take personal risks.	Directions for strict emotional control.
• Emotional understanding	Similar findings (Beatty, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003b).	Place great emphasis on emotional understanding.	Escape from the Ministry's emotion-neutral directions.	Strict emotional control and suppression.
• Promoting teachers' professional growth	Partly similar findings (Blase and Blase, 1998; Day, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2006).	They develop the learning environment in short period of time.	Re-arrange the school programme. Spend a lot of time with teachers. Support teachers to develop collaborative practices.	The system does not provide time for the professional development of teachers.
• Students learning	Similar findings (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Gurr et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007).	There are no achievement test so we do not know the extend of students outcomes.	Care personally for students' development. Know the curriculum very well so they help students.	They do not have recourses to help students learning (e.g. to appoint teachers based on students needs).
• <i>Person-centred leadership approaches</i>	Similar findings but more intensive (Lambert, 1998; Day, 2000; Day and Leithwood, 2007).	A very strong quality of Cypriot successful heads.	They are concerned with the happiness, the welfare and safety of people.	Managerial and impersonal character of education.

Table 5.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationships and barriers

## 5.5 Discussion

In conclusion, the data analysis highlights the contribution of the heads to the quality of education in their school. Successful heads in the Cyprus educational context have a key role in determining the success of a school. The data showed that all of them developed common 'core' or 'generic' practices in leading their school to success, but at the same time, they also adopted different strategies to reach their school's goals. In this sense, the findings showed that there was a variation in success. Successful heads followed different paths of practices to achieve success because, as we have discussed above, there was differentiation in students and community needs, in teachers' stage of readiness and in head teachers' characters. However, the findings which emerged indicated that all of them maximize learning in their schools, a fact that helped the school as an organization to adapt more easily to external and internal environmental changes (Morrison, 2002). Learning was the key concept for the growth of individuals and gradually for the whole organization. Successful heads created the conditions and set the frameworks in order to establish a learning environment in their schools.

Having deep commitment to their school goals, they were always searching for ways and approaches to enhance learning by emphasizing learning within the organization from the experience of others and themselves. They were alert and able to take feedback from the environment in order to make corrections to their strategies, practices and values and to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Successful heads intervened in school cultures and differentiated teachers, students and parents' attitudes, expectations and perceptions about school by emphasizing learning for everyone. At the same time, they gave a moral dimension to their leadership by constantly communicating their personal values and beliefs in order to

propose and share the school purpose, goals and priorities. In this sense, they achieved change in a collaborative, cooperative and healthy climate with all people around them. Change was developed within the school, from head and teacher initiatives, a fact that increased commitment and loyalty to school goals. Although successful heads served a short period of time in their schools (in relation to the Western countries, see Chapter 2) the research findings showed that they had vision and they conceptualized their role as 'change fighters'.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CROSS CASE ANALYSIS (2): SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter, is to continue to discuss the cross case analysis of the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The central themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis show the similarities and differences of practices, skills, qualities and strategies among the successful head teachers' sample. Four themes emerged: (1) 'learning heads', (2) 'similarities of headship approaches and social context', (3) 'leading democratically' and (4) 'rotation policy: a critique' (see Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns). Specifically, first I will discuss the theme of learning heads which is consists of two sub-themes: self development, and the relationship between head teachers' priorities and their experience. This theme examines how head teachers' become life-long learners. In the second theme, I will discuss the similarities of head teachers approaches and their relationships to social context. This will be followed by the third theme - leading democratically. This includes practices and qualities of heads which helped them develop a 'democratic climate' in their schools. The final theme of this chapter is 'rotation policy: a critique' and includes the constraints of the policy of rotating heads and teachers among schools, and how such a policy influences head teachers practices. Research findings underline the contextual character of leadership (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Day and Leithwood, 2007). They claim that school contexts affect leadership practices. For example, school context has a central role for

head teachers in adopting the appropriate strategies and setting the priorities for their schools.

<b>Themes, sub-themes and patterns</b>
<b>6.2 Learning Heads</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Self development</li><li>2. Heads' priorities and their experience</li></ol>
<b>6.3 Similarities and differences of headship approaches and social context</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Similarities of head strategies within the same SES</li><li>2. Similarities of heads strategies in leading the same school size</li></ol>
<b>6.4 Leading democratically</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Participatory approach</li><li>2. Developing ownership</li><li>3. Equality, respect, justice</li><li>4. Communication networks</li><li>5. Good listeners</li><li>6. No pressure</li></ol>
<b>6.5 Rotation policy: a critique</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. School culture gets confused</li><li>2. Limited time for heads at a school</li><li>3. Lack of sensitivity to school needs</li></ol>

Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns

## **6.2 Learning Heads**

In this section, I will discuss the first theme of this chapter 'Learning heads' and it consists of two sub-themes: 'Self development' and 'Heads' priorities and their experience' (see Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

### **6.2.1 Self development**

The first sub-theme of 'Learning heads' is related to head teachers' development. From the data analysis it emerged that most of the successful heads in the study were concerned with their learning (Barth, 1990; Lambert, 2003; Day, 2003c; Sugrue, 2005a). They claimed that they were interested in improving their knowledge about leadership and management by being life long learners. A number of them developed the concept of reflective practice to overcome the difficult, complex and messy situations which developed in their schools. The literature on reflection suggests that it is a learning process (Sergiovanni, 2001a), and specifically Day (2003c) emphasized that it involves heads in a critique of practice, the values which are implicit in that practice, the personal, social, institutional and broad policy contexts in which practice takes place, and the implications of these for improvement of that practice.

In this study, the professional development of heads seemed to be a private rather than governmental business. In the Cyprus Educational System it is possible for someone to be promoted to the position of head without any additional qualifications beyond those necessary for entry to the teaching profession. Over the last decades there has been an attempt to provide training to newly appointed heads sometime between the first and the second year of their promotion. However, as it has emerged from the data heads professional development was dependent mostly on their private interest. All of

them prepared themselves for the forthcoming promotion by attending postgraduates' courses related to leadership, by studying books that were related to education emphasizing leadership, and by attending seminars. Such active involvement in their own development enabled them to meet headships' obligations and purposes:

*I felt the need for more self-development ... further studies helped me a lot in order to lead my school (Head, School 8).*

*I read many books on school administration ... I attended many seminars on leadership ... I have been influenced by the successful practices of my ex-heads; they were bright examples for me (Head, School 6).*

Further, all of them felt they were not adequately prepared or supported for the headship position. They complained about the type and the content of the head teachers' seminars that the MOEC provided for them at the beginning of their career as heads. Similarly, the more experienced heads added the need for professional support and well organized professional education from the MOEC, even for the more experienced heads:

*My experience in headship is more or less like everyone's ... The first year of my experience I felt that I was all alone in an ocean trying to save myself and the others (Head, School 6).*

*The Pedagogical Institute provides some seminars for heads but unfortunately after the heads are appointed to their position. I felt like I had to swim in the middle of the sea in order to learn swimming ... I think that the heads' initial education programme needs a lot of improvement, it is not a programme that will help a teacher move from the teaching responsibilities to administrative responsibilities (Head, School 8).*

A number of the heads emphasised that their learning was their priority because a well educated and a highly competent head was required to handle the changes and to foster practices which were responsive to the educational needs of children and teachers. They aimed to become models for their staff and students as 'head learners' (Barth, 1990:72):

*Times are changing and most of the teachers are highly educated. So I want to attain the abilities to advice and lead them in the right manner. I want to be the model for them in learning. For this reason, I have conduct with the University, I am a member in a number of educational societies (Head, School 1).*

*I prepared myself for this position in order to become ready to help my colleagues. I'd like to be a model for my teachers (Head, School 1).*

Further, all of the heads considered themselves as life long learners because they studied through the years of their career. However, they wished they had more chances for formal professional development. The following quotes stressed their need for self improvement and their love to be educated:

*I believe in life long learning. During my career I kept searching ways to become improve professionally. Every year I participated in Pedagogical Institute seminars. I have attended more than 800 teaching hours of seminars (Head, School 1).*

*I think that 'what I know is not enough', so, I am trying to be a life long learner (Head, School 2).*

Along with that, it was also clear from the data that some heads developed reflective practices (Sergiovanni, 2001a; Day, 2003a) to improve their approach to leading their school. Most of them used reflection as a result of their long running experience in education. They developed the ability to revise their decisions, strategies or approaches to reflect and finally to learn. Reflective leadership involves being critical, aware of what successful heads are doing and why. As it will be analyzed in the following section this practice helped heads to differentiate their practices according to school contexts and people's needs:

*... I undergo self-evaluation regarding my practices ... If some of my practices seem to work then I adopt them, or if I use wrong practices I try to improve them. Now, I feel more mature than ever before (Head, School 3).*



*I undergo self-evaluation on a continually basis. Everyday I reflect on my day: how I passed the day, what happened and what did not happen, what went wrong, what are my responsibilities, why we are not moving towards our target, what should I do extra, what will be my actions to face these problems. I give feedback to myself ... I learn from my mistakes, a fact that leads me to self-improvement (Head, School 2).*

By involving reflective practices in leading, they admitted that they improved throughout the years by improving their knowledge, their practices and changing their priorities.

*Of course after some time in the position I have improved. Through the years I have differentiated the way I lead the school (Head, School 8).*

*Through the years I have changed the way I solve problems and the perspective that I discuss school problems and difficulties. I think that experience has helped me because I became more mature and I was given the opportunity to develop my personal leadership qualities (Head, School 2).*

Although, the successful heads in this study were at different stages of their careers, had different levels of experience and worked in very different settings, they all seemed to associate leading with learning. They strongly acknowledged the need for continuous personal development in their profession as a medium to help them cope with the changing, complex and demanding environment in their schools. However, the seminars that were assigned for their professional growth did not provide them with the appropriate knowledge. All of the heads expressed the desire for more and systematic professional development. It is not surprising that feelings of isolation and loneliness were emotions that almost all of the heads expressed.

In addition to that, successful heads developed 'reflective leadership' to cope with their job difficulties and to improve their practices. Some of the successful heads were critical leaders and used reflection as one of their day-to-day practices. They

examined their practices by reflecting on them and were aware of or how other people around them felt. These practices helped them to construct and improve their professional knowledge. This kind of knowledge, together with their set of values seemed to guide and inform their professional practice. However, reflection was just a personal matter; they learned to be reflective either through reading books and articles or through their experience in schools. So, successful heads believed that they needed to formally enhance their reflective capacities in order to use reflection on a systematic basis.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of learning in leadership succession (Barth, 1990; Biott, Moos and Møller, 2001; Southworth, 2000). In an international study with 40 heads from four countries, MacBeath and his colleagues found that the capacity of 'effective' head teachers to be continual learners was a key to a school success. They argued that it relied on their ability to revise their approach and to learn from it. Similarly, Day et al. (2000), who followed a multi-perspective approach, a study with twelve successful head teachers in England found that successful heads engaged in systematic reflection which contributed to their capacity to develop as well as to the good of the school. Sugrue and his colleagues (2005b), using a life history approach, with head teachers from Denmark, Norway, England and Ireland concluded that in the countries of the study there was a need to put in place more opportunities for heads to learn, as well as more learning support structures in order to minimize initial feelings and to prepare them for the complexity of the role. These findings show that, learning is significant for leadership succession. Further, Western countries spend a large amount of the professional development budget on leadership education,

however, some researchers emphasized that there is much more to be done in that direction (Southworth, 2000; Day, 2003c; Dimmock, 2003).

The findings of this research partly agree with international studies on the importance of head teachers' professional learning. However, the meaning of the need for more professional development is not the same in the Cyprus and in the Western countries context. The head teachers in Cyprus build their career development upon experience and intuition because of the lack of proper education programmes (Day, 2003c). This constitutes a huge constraint for heads in Cyprus. Although they have passion for their job and are open to new ideas of leading their schools, there are not appropriate in service education programmes. The governments' strategic policy fails to prepare programmes based on contemporary research based on leadership findings. In contrast, in other countries (Western countries) in service education of head teachers exists as a systematic basic.

In addition to that, in Cyprus the budget which is spent for the formal professional development of heads and its quality, seem to be limited in comparison to those of Western countries (e.g. National College of School Leadership). In this respect, more systematic education for Cypriot head teachers is needed in order to increase their self-efficacy and confidence, their abilities to support people around them and to decrease emotions of loneliness.

The message of this section, therefore, is the existence of zeal and enthusiasm for professional learning among successful heads. They expressed the need to be holistically prepared for the position of head teacher and be able to cope with the

difficulties and complexity of their position. This would make them able to support their staff to achieve higher levels of professionalism and the students to achieve the school goals. Despite the limited formal education by the government, they were motivated to study by themselves. The love, passion and commitment to their job and specifically to students and teachers made them prepared by on a personal level for the position (e.g. personal reading, they attended graduate programmes in School Leadership) (Table 6.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationship and barriers). This study, therefore, points out the importance of learning in the successful heads lives and the great need for their continual professional development.

Since this point of the research analysis I have discussed the first sub-theme: 'Self development' of the theme with the title: 'Learning heads'. In the following section I will discuss the second (and last) sub-theme named 'heads' priorities and their experience'.

### **6.2.2 Heads' priorities and their experience**

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data was the head teachers' priorities and their experience. The data showed that the heads set different priorities during their early years at a school in comparison with their later years (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996; Reeves et al., 1997; Macmillan, 1998; Weindling, 1999). Analyzing their interviews, it emerged that they did not consciously understand the way they prioritized their practices; however, they developed those practices according to the needs and the context of their schools (Bossert et al., 1982; Clarke and Wildy, 2004; Jacobson et al., 2005). These practices were related to the external and internal environment of the school as well as its infrastructure. Of course, there were no

defined boundaries for priorities or specific time limits for finishing those priorities. According to the data their first priority, after they were appointed to a school, was focused on building healthy relationships with parents and the community, by setting the conditions to develop a climate of mutual trust and respect. In this sense, and as I have already discussed above, they promoted collaboration with the external environment in order to involve parents and the community in the activities of their school, to share with them the school vision and goals and to solve students' problems (Leithwood et al., 2006):

*During the first years of my career as a head, I served in a small village on the mountains. My first priority was to involve the parents and the community in our school's activities. We had an excellent collaboration. All together we organized cultural activities for the students and the community in general ... At this point of my career, and at this school in particular, we mostly focused on students learning (Head, School 9).*

*When I was a head at a village-during the first two years of my career-my teachers and I had a close collaboration with the community in order to renew the school's resources and the school buildings (Head, School 5).*

In one case, as the head reported, during the first months of experience at her school she adopted autocratic practices in order to gain the trust of parents and the community (Barth, 1990). She believed that the centralised decisions and practices were the answer to the suspiciousness of the external environment. This suspiciousness had been transmitted to parents and the community in the previous years, because of their (parents') bad experiences with some heads. Her main concern was to send the message to them that 'the school does not discriminate. It cares in the same way about all students' (School 6). After the parents showed trust and respect for school decisions she switched to a democratic leadership approach.

The data further suggests that during the first year of headship, the heads had investigated the school environment, in order to explore the teachers' and students' needs and abilities and to have a clear picture of their capacity. Based on that evaluation they decided the next set of priorities: managing students' behaviour, increasing discipline and focusing on students learning. The former priority had been based on their belief that school was focused on developing the whole personality of students. According to heads, the implementation of an interventional behaviour program helped students to improve their achievement as well as their interpersonal relationships with other students. In almost all schools in the study, successful heads managed to develop a code of practice regarding behaviour management, in collaboration with students, teachers and parents.

The latter priority was related to students learning. Successful heads seemed to know from their experience that the improvement of students' achievement was strongly related to teachers' professional growth, a theme that we extensively discussed in the previous chapter. Although almost all the heads in this study promoted professional growth in their schools, only the heads with five or more years of experience in the same school had as their priority the professional growth of their teachers. They seemed to be more confident about encouraging and supporting their teachers to use innovative ways of teaching (e.g. team teaching, collaboration between the staff).

In addition, all the heads reported that their long-term priority was the development of their schools' infrastructure. Specifically, they continually explored the needs of students and teachers in order to improve their working conditions. These plans were connected to the improvement of school buildings and yard regarding for example,

teaching rooms, labs, the playground, the garden. So, they developed a close collaboration with the parents’ associations and the community to find financial support or to find the right argument to persuade the MOEC and make their plans true. Finally, it is important to underline, that these approaches to school leadership were not linear. They were complex and stressful procedures which were driven by the knowledge, skills, qualities, values and beliefs of head teachers in the specific contexts (Morrison, 2002).

I have developed a table to show how the school experience of the heads, differentiate their priorities (see Table 6.2: Head teachers’ priorities and their experiences). The heads with ‘short experience-tenure’ at a school took small and directed steps at a time. They tried to lay the foundation for their future work, both spiritual and materialistic. Of course, these priorities have no clear boundaries or time limits. The ‘long tenure’ of a head at a school resulted in increasing heads confidence and self-efficacy in practising more complex and ‘risky’ practices that were not imposed by the system.

	Head teachers’ priorities
<div> <div>Heads experience in a school</div> <div> <div>↑ Short</div> <div>↓ Long experience</div> </div> </div>	Relations with parents/community-trust and respect
	Develop infrastructure works/improve the conditions in which they work
	Students behaviour
	Emphasis on learning
	Using a variety of methods e.g. team teaching, collaborative learning

Table 6.2: Head teachers’ priorities and their experiences

In general, the successful heads in Cyprus seemed to prioritize their practices when they were appointed to a new school environment (Franey, 2002; Day, 2007). They focused on constructing healthy relationships with parents and the community; they emphasized the improvement of students discipline regarding their behaviour and their school responsibilities; they focused on student learning through the professional growth of their staff; and finally, they concentrated on the development of the infrastructure of their schools.

The findings of this research partly agree with international studies on the relationship of head teachers experience and setting priorities. Previous research has showed that heads in Western countries need time to adapt in a new school environment and to set the school priorities (Reeves et al., 1997; Weindling, 1999). In contrast, heads in the Cypriot context seem to be forced to be resilient to change and to be flexible due to the rotation policy that exists on the island. For this reason, they set priorities in short periods of time in order to lead schools to success. Although the data showed that they achieved direction in school and set their priorities, however, they do not set the distribution of leadership as one of their priorities like successful heads in Western countries (Moos, Krejsler, Kofod and Jensen, 2005; Spillane, 2006; Day 2007; Harris 2008). The reason for that could well be the lack of appropriate professional support, and continual professional development for head teachers. It could also be the short period of time that they serve at a school -because they have to move around schools- and they might need to have long term experience at a school to move at this level of leadership (Table 6.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationship and barriers). Finally, it is important to specify that the priorities that successful heads set were always



according to the functional needs of their school, their teachers, students and the community as a whole.

In this part of the chapter I discussed the first theme of the study 'Learning heads'. Particularly, I have discussed the two sub themes that are related to: 'Self development' and 'Heads' priorities and their experiences '. In the next part I will discuss the second theme which is 'Similarities and differences of headship approaches and social context' (see also Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

### **6.3 Similarities and Differences of Headship Approaches and Social Context**

The second theme of this study as it emerged from the data is 'Similarities and differences of headship approaches and social context' and it consists of two sub-themes: 'Similarities of heads strategies within the same SES schools' and 'Similarities of heads strategies leading the same school size' (see also Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns).

#### **6.3.1 Similarities of heads strategies within the same SES schools**

The evidence collected within the study suggests that head teachers' practices were influenced by the SES level of their school. These practices seemed to differentiate their way of leadership as the schools real needs changed (see Table 6.3:

Differentiation of successful leadership in varying school contexts). Research findings have revealed the differentiation in leadership approaches in diverse contexts. For example, Harris and Chapman (2002) in a study with ten English secondary schools which faced challenging circumstances found that headship approaches were often very direct and task focused. However, in schools with middle to high SES the

potential for alternative leadership approaches clearly existed. Similarly, Hallinger, Bickman and Davis (1996) reported that heads in higher SES schools exercised more active leadership than their counterparts in schools serving students of lower SES.

In this study, heads in low SES schools emphasized more inclusive practices of leadership (Day, 2005a; Ryan, 2006). For example, one of their priorities was to provide an environment in which security and happiness would be its main characteristics. They aimed to make students coming from low SES families feel happy and valued in the school environment. They showed caring for improving the achievement of their students by changing the teaching methods (Harris et al., 2006; Goldring, Huff, May, Camburn, 2008) and they had personal conduct with the families of their students (sometimes they visited parents at family residences). Their activities were limited to learning tasks and they mainly focused on learning:

*Children of wealthy families have no need for support; they have someone to care for them. On the contrary, children of low income families need support. For this reason, I, and my teachers pay special attention to poor or immigrant students and their families. We endeavour to help them [financially and emotionally] (Head, School 3).*

*Their parents' emphasis is on the provision of food and clothing only little attention is paid to their education. They work for many hours and they have almost no communication with their children. In order to help them with their homework we employed retired teachers who work for free or at a low rate (Head, School 5).*

*We aim to develop a culture in our school that is related to (a) 'I want to learn, I want to become better' and (b) our students to respect the difference among them (Head, School 7).*

*Successful teaching and learning in this school is achieved through the development of a rich learning environment, the development of an atmosphere full of a diversity of activities, the use of contemporary teaching approaches and the use of new technologies (Head, School 7).*

A head teacher who led a low to middle SES school has argued passionately that he set as one of his school priorities the mutual acceptance of students, and the building of their self-esteem. He and his staff adopted an initiative regarding the development of emotional intelligence in their school:

*The priority is on values rather than knowledge ... is to help students develop certain attitudes and values ... to build their self-esteem (Head, School 7).*

Although heads worked hard to develop a kind of collaboration with parents by involving them in the activities of schools, the results were not satisfactory:

*Our head is constant in communication with parents but the majority of them do not cooperate with the school, the teachers or the head (Parent, School 5).*

Discussing this issue with teachers, they reported that several times they felt disappointed with the lack of interest from parents and students regarding learning. In such cases, heads performed a support role. They encouraged their staff to keep helping and supporting students, and at the same time, they undertook the responsibility to communicate with parents:

*Sometimes I feel disappointment with students who do not do their homework ... I feel angry with some parents who do not answer my phone calls or my letters. However, my head whenever he realizes my disappointment tells me: 'do not worry I will communicate with the parents' (Teacher 2, School 5).*

On the other side, the heads who led high and middle to high SES schools presented a different picture of the reality in the Cyprus schools. Even though they emphasized learning, at the same time they seemed to encourage a climate of creativity and action among teachers, students, parents and the community. They used practices that were connected to the external environment of the school in collaboration with their community – they adopted practices which allowed the school to be more open to

society and the external environment (Hallinger and Heck, 1998). In almost all middle to high and high SES schools there was an emphasis on school events, activities and celebrations. Therefore, the social context of a school influences the way successful heads approach leadership. The idea of 'one best' approach that fits all situations and conditions seems to be replaced. One model of leadership cannot be transposed from one context to another, because it is not a static model (Riley and MacBeath, 1998; Dimmock and Walker, 2000a; Morrison, 2002). School headship in times of change is about having priorities, making choices and having the capacity to adapt to the situation and circumstances.

Further, heads of high and middle to high SES schools emphasized the high level of accountability that existed in their schools. This kind of accountability was connected with parents and their worries regarding [their] children's achievement, as they appeared to have high expectations from them (Moos, Krejsler, Kofod, and Jensen, 2005). From the data, all heads of high and middle to high SES schools appeared to defend school decisions and teachers actions when parents came to school to complain. In this sense, they tended to always be well informed about whatever happened in their schools, to develop a high level of communicative abilities and to use transparent processes in decision making. This kind of communication with parents seemed to help in building an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between them (parents and the head). As I discussed in chapter five heads acted as a buffer to the distractions of the external environment. By using negotiations, they tried to solve any kind of conflict, disagreement or problematic situation as soon as possible:

*I teach all classes of the school. I want to know personally all students. I have a personal opinion on all students so I can handle adequately many of the problems that the parents raise (Head, School 6).*

*I teach at all of my school classes a 40 minute period lesson weekly. I monitor my teachers indirectly. I check students' text books and the way teachers work, I know all the students by their names, their learning level and their emotional status. In this way ... I have a personal opinion for every student and I can face off the parents on any issue... all the time we are accountable to parents at any time (Head, School 1).*

Teachers supported the argument that their heads developed a constant communication with parents by discussing with them their children's 'problems'. As they reported, heads used a lot of their time consulting parents and their children:

*She spends a lot of time with parents who visit her ... she spends this time talking, discussing with them and explaining things to them. In this school that parents seem to be extra demanding (Deputy head, School 9).*

*Parents in this school are very sensitive ... our head invites them in her office and discusses with them their children's problems. She never gets angry, either with teachers or with parents. She listens to everybody: a tiny or a big problem. She gives attention to everybody (Teacher 1, School 9).*

*The handling of parents' is one of the most sensitive issues handled by the head. I think that our head has the appropriate relationship and the appropriate communication with them. I think that she tries to keep them in balance (Teacher1, School 6).*

Discussion with parents was not considered as a threat or distrust by the heads; however, they explained it as a way to show their care and high expectations for their children:

*Parents communicate among themselves as well as with parents having children in other schools. They are informed on other schools' practices, and of course, they compare and criticise schools. They come with their suggestions and we listen to them. They come to school and freely express their opinion (Head, School 6).*

*Parents are people who care a lot about their children at this school and always give their feedback on school activities (Deputy head, School 1).*

*The parents of this school's children are very good and sensitive and they show a tremendous interest on their children's improvement. We feel that, we will get a favourable response to anything we ask them for (Teacher 1, School 1).*

The parents of high SES schools showed a great interest in collaborating with the school, in participating in school activities, and in supporting morally as well as financially all the school events and activities (Moos et al., 2005). Successful heads reported that parents were always at their side by helping, encouraging and supporting their planning, because they wanted the 'best for their children'.

In this respect, the data indicated that the approaches of heads who led schools with high SES, were different from their colleagues' leadership practices who led schools with low SES (Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger and Heck, 1998). Successful heads differentiated their priorities because of the actual needs of students and their families. The evidence also indicated the existence of differentiation between the kind of tactics, relationships and communication that successful heads adopted with parents in different contexts. They were successful in different ways by developing a different repertoire of practices to approaching leadership. The findings of the study, therefore, underscore the relational character of 'success', which means that all heads were successful in their particular context, with specific people approaching leadership differently (see Table 6.3: Differentiation of successful leadership in varying school contexts).

Previous research also underlined the differentiation in leadership practices among heads who led diverse SES school contexts (Hallinger et al. 1996; Harris and Chapman, 2002; Day, 2005a; Harris et al., 2006; Ylimaki et al., 2007). For example, Hallinger and Heck (1999), in a review of the research related to school context and leadership, concluded that 'teacher and administrator attitudes appear to be shaped by expectations and beliefs of the wider community' (p. 183). This means that the

schools external environment appeared to influence the leadership as well as the teaching practices. In addition, leaders' relationships with parents and the broader community in low SES schools seemed to be weaker and leaders made strong efforts to communicate and involve them in school activities. In contrast, in high SES schools there were strong relationships and better collaboration with parents, while at the same time, heads tried to expand the boundaries of collaboration with parents (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Hayes, 1995).

The findings of this study seem to resonate with the international research findings. Heads from Cyprus and Western countries differentiated their practices according to the SES of their schools. However, Cypriot heads had limitations on their actions due to the centralized system (Table 6.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationship and barriers). Particularly, the MOEC claimed that it provided equal opportunities to all students by providing the same services to students from unequal SES. Consequently, this policy promotes inequality. The data showed that successful heads - especially those in low SES schools - seemed to understand the limitations of the particular policy and they used alternative forms of action.

### **6.3.2 Similarities of heads strategies in leading same schools size**

Successful heads who worked in small size schools achieved the development of networks [in their schools], which means that they promoted excellent relationships among the staff (Southworth, 1998; Hill and Celio, 1998; Leithwood and Steinbach, 2003; Clarke and Wildy, 2004). These relationships were expressed through a pleasant, friendly and creative school atmosphere. This kind of atmosphere acted as a catalyst to encourage and the develop collaboration among staff:

*... it is a fact that we do not know everything and if someone stays within in his/her shell his/her educational horizons will never open ... with collaboration, communication and hard work we will improve ourselves and become better (Head, School 3).*

Heads at small schools, were working towards the establishment of collaboration among their staff, even under the difficult conditions of the hierarchical and strict structural educational system of Cyprus. They (re-)scheduled the school programme in a way to offer more chances for collaboration to their staff. According to the data, the teachers during 'the collaboration time' discussed and analysed the curriculum and the school goals, wrote objectives and designed lessons to achieve them:

*Our head encourages us to collaborate with our colleagues. Since the beginning of the year, she prepared a schedule for class coordination and collaboration. She tries to find ways and time to collaborate ... I think she tries a lot and this is the reason for her success (Teacher 1, School 3).*

*I collaborate with the teachers of the second grade ... I feel that there is mutual trust among us and this feeling helped me to be open to them and exchange ideas with them. I have been positively influenced but I think that I influence them too. I collaborate with my colleagues because I want to and I enjoy this collaboration (Teacher 2, School 7).*

People in small schools built up tighter relationships by knowing each other better and they developed more opportunities to share ideas and experiences (Clarke and Wildy, 2004; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006). For instance, teachers knew all students by their names, their achievement level and their family background. In this way, the every day relationships with students were in a friendly environment and their problems were more easily solved in a collaborative climate. These findings tally with those of Leithwood and Steinbach (2003) who's analysis suggest that smaller schools increase the likelihood of students having a close, ongoing relationship with at least one other significant adult in the school. Teachers also had a more personal relationship with the learning of each child.



Previous research showed that heads who led small schools developed a closer relationship with their staff, they had a stronger direct influence on their students and developed collaboration among teachers (Hill and Celio, 1998).

In contrast, in medium and large sized schools the data from the study showed that communication among the staff was more complicated (see Table 6.3: Differentiation of successful leadership in varying school contexts):

*I work with specific persons (teachers) in the school because it is difficult to work with all the teachers. It is difficult, they are too many, it is a very big school – a mammoth sized school ... it becomes an impersonal entity ... I lost conduct with my colleagues. In contrast, a few years ago I worked at a small school with seven teachers, I collaborated with all of them ... we were like a family (Teacher 1, School 5).*

When I was shadowing in the big schools, I saw limited communication among the staff and between heads and staff. The inadequate time for common meetings and discussions in relation to the large number of staff was a serious barrier in developing collaboration among them. All the heads of the big schools, underscored that they spent a lot of their after school time preparing and organising school in order for everything to flow smoothly. Some of them used delegation and some others in a more democratic spirit, provided a lot of opportunities to their staff to share leadership.

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**Differentiation of successful leadership practices  
in varying school contexts**

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<b>Leadership in Small Size School</b>	<b>Leadership in Medium-Large Size School</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developed networks within schools</li> <li>▪ Developed excellent relationships</li> <li>▪ Developed collaboration among teachers</li> <li>▪ Personal relationships with parents and students</li> <li>▪ Focused on each individual student's difficulties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficult communication among teachers regarding school matters</li> <li>▪ Developed compromise qualities</li> <li>▪ Heads were the persons who teachers collaborate with</li> <li>▪ Strong efforts to know all the students and parents by their names</li> <li>▪ Spent a lot of time in organizing school, used delegation</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership in Low SES</b>	<b>Leadership in High SES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Searched for contemporary teaching methods</li> <li>▪ Focused on inclusive practices</li> <li>▪ Focused on making parents collaborate with school</li> <li>▪ Strongly supported their staff because of regular disappointments</li> <li>▪ Solved personally students problems</li> <li>▪ Improved students interpersonal relationships</li> <li>▪ Focused on raising students self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasised learning climate and creativity</li> <li>▪ Emphasised school events and celebrations</li> <li>▪ Focused on collaboration among teachers, students and parents</li> <li>▪ Acted as a buffer to the distractions of the external environment</li> <li>▪ High accountability to parents</li> <li>▪ Focused on constant communication with parents</li> <li>▪ Opened to community</li> <li>▪ Transparency in decision making</li> </ul>

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Table 6.3: Differentiation of successful leadership in varying school contexts

In this section, I have discussed the second theme of this chapter - Similarities and differences of headship approaches and social context - which presented the similarities of head teachers approaches in the same SES and in the same school size. Along with this the differences between head teachers' practices have emerged between the headship at different SES schools and for different school sizes. In the next section I will discuss the third theme which illustrates how successful heads provide democratic leadership in their schools (see Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes, patterns).

#### **6.4 Leading Democratically**

The second theme of this study as it emerged from the data is 'Leading democratically' and it is based on six strategies: 'participatory approach', 'developing ownership', 'equity, respect, justice', 'communication networks', 'good listeners', 'no pressure' (see also Table 6.1: Themes, sub-themes and patterns). Leading democratically is a quality of successful heads that has emerged from the data analysis. However, the evidence showed that meaning and practices of democratic processes were not exactly the same among all successful heads. There were variations on the forms of democracy in those schools. The international research has also shown that there is a discrepancy in the way the different educational systems across the world, conceptualize and practice the meaning of democracy in schools. For example, the Scandinavian countries place considerable emphasis on democracy and democratic learning. In these countries democratic leadership means that the leader himself/herself is leading the school in accordance with democratic ideas. He/she prepares the active participation of students in civic life by participating in planning and evaluation of their (students') daily education. Everybody has a say in

decision making while leaders are responsible for promoting the professional dialogue in schools (Mahony and Moos, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Johansson, 2004; Vedøy and Møller, 2007). Further, in the United States democratic leadership means that all of those who are directly involved in a school have the right to participate in the process of decision making. For this reason, democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy-making (Apple and Beane, 1999). In the U.K., democratic leadership is strongly criticized by writers compared with democratic leadership in the U.S.A., Scandinavian countries, Australia and Hong Kong (Mahony and Moos, 1998; Riley, 2003; Hatcher, 2005). They claim that the participatory approaches of leadership operate within a head teacher-dominated hierarchy of power (Hatcher, 2005). The important core function of democratic leadership, according to Bienenstock (1954), is to promote conditions under which individuals can grow to intellectual and emotional maturity, and can learn to think and act together. In a democracy both leaders and followers participate in joint enterprise, and work together to attain a mutually desired goal. It is essential to the successful operation of democratic leadership that it be expressed in thinking and acting with followers rather than for them. 'The real issue in a democracy is not who should be a leader and who a follower, but when to be a leader and when to be a follower' (Bienenstock, 1954:401). Based on this study's research evidence, leading democratically in the Cyprus Educational System is limited and defined as the promotion of the active participation of teaching staff in decision-making and especially on issues that are directly or indirectly related to them. This is based on the provision of a clear set of values of equality and respect. In addition to this, successful heads shared some of their power by delegating responsibilities to their teachers and by giving them space to be creative within a hierarchical environment.

	Leading democratically									
	Cases	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
Heads' Strategies										
	Participatory approach	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓**
	Developing ownership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Equality, respect, justice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓**
	Communication networks	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓
	Good listeners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	No pressure	-	-	-	-	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*

Table 6.4: Leading democratically

The data indicated that the practices of these successful heads were organized around their particular interpretation of democracy which had its roots in ethical and humanitarian values. Almost all heads reported that their values were influenced by their religion. Only one of them believed that his democratic values emerged from his political beliefs and his deep belief in the liberty of thought. Despite the hierarchical system, heads in this study intended to develop democracy in their schools.

Democracy was expressed through the participation of teachers in decision making and as a construction of a democratic atmosphere by developing: (a) a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among everybody in the school (b) a feeling of equality and justice for all people involved, not least the teachers (c) establishment of communication networks (d) a widespread feeling among teachers, students and parents that their head was always ready to listen to their problems or perspectives and (e) a feeling of freedom among teachers (see Table 6.4: Leading democratically).

Most of the heads who participated in this study stated that they followed

‘democratic’ processes in their schools. They defined them as:

*Democratic leadership exists when a leader follows a participative model of leadership. This means that he/she leads the school together with his/her colleagues (Head, School, 1).*

*Democratic leadership means that we decide together. My colleagues and I put together our ideas and we decide which the best idea is. A teacher's suggestion might be better than mine or my suggestion might be improved. I think that the head should not be absolute; he/she should be consensus (Head, School 2).*

When the teachers were asked if their heads were democratic, most of them answered positively. However, they did not always define democratic leadership in the same way. For example:

*Democratic leadership means that teachers participate in decision-making ... in decisions that are related to them. The heads should have a consultative and a coordinative role during the decision-making process (Teacher 1, School 8).*

*Democratic leadership means that we decide together with our head. We discuss together the school's agenda – issues which are related to us - and we attempt to identify the positive and negative aspects of our decision. The head gives us ample time to think before we make any decision. Democratic leadership also means that the teachers feel free to express their opinion (Teacher1, School 7).*

*Democratic leadership means that there is transparency to all school decisions. The head informs teachers on all school issues and engages them in discussion in order to make a decision as a team (Teacher 1, School 9).*

It appeared, therefore, that the term 'democratic' meant different things to heads and teachers. The above perspectives of democracy in schools, as we have seen, also differ from those found in the literature. This is likely to be as a result of the centralized Educational System in Cyprus. For example, most of the decisions related to schools (e.g. staff appointment, in-service training, teachers leaves), are taken by the bureaucrats at the MOEC. The schools are informed by circulars. Consequently, each school has a strictly limited number of themes to decide on, in comparison with schools in decentralized systems.

In addition, Cyprus seemed to lag behind the rest of Europe in terms of students' rights. Based on this study evidence, students had no right to participate in school decision making or even in decisions that were strongly related to them. In contrast, studies in Denmark, Holland, Sweden and Germany showed the representation of students at school councils, on school boards and on curriculum committees (Davies and Kirkpatrick, 2000).

#### **6.4.1 Participative model of decision making**

Almost all (N: 6) successful heads promoted a participative model of decision making where all teachers had the opportunity to present their ideas and decide together about issues important to the schools in a climate of transparency and understanding (MacBeath, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Frick, 2009). Those heads seemed to respect their colleagues and especially they respected the decisions of teachers' meetings. They valued those decisions in order to build a democratic school culture:

*I follow the participative model ... I give opportunities to all my teachers and I try to decentralize school processes. Although I decentralized the school processes, I always monitor the procedure of activities. I think that the most powerful body in the school regarding decision making is the teachers' meetings. The decisions that are taken are democratic, collective ... I only intervene in decision making when values and principles are in danger (Head, School 10).*

*Teachers' meetings is the supreme body that makes the decisions. I always want to be honest and fair with my colleagues, I do not keep any school issue in secrecy. We discuss all the aspects of a problem; I want to step in their shoes and understand what they feel in order to reach a solution (Head, School 9).*

*The most important aspect of leadership is the participation of teaching staff in decision making process. They should feel that they have an important role in decision making and participation in the school's procedures. They should not have the feeling that they obey anybody's orders. I think that the staff should participate in the decision making process as well as in the implementation of a decision; moreover, they should feel free to take initiatives (Head, School 7).*

Almost all the teachers supported the argument that their heads promoted their participation in decision making in issues that were related to them. Decision making processes in those schools were flexible and problem oriented:

*She engages us in decisions that are related to us. We discuss these issues at the teachers' meetings (Teacher 1, School 8).*

*She is very democratic ... We decide all together about the school issues. First we discuss the issues together at the teachers' meetings and when an agreement is reached we move to the materialization of our decision (Teacher 1, School 9).*

*He is a very democratic person ... he gives us time to discuss ... he never exerts pressure on us to make decisions we do not like ... he listens to our arguments and all together we try to find the best solution (Teacher 1, School 7).*

*Whenever is necessary we have short meetings during breaks in order to be informed or to make a decision on running issues (Teacher 2, School 9).*

*The deputy heads have the most important responsibilities in our school. Our head identifies our talents and might distribute to a teacher a very serious responsibility e.g. to organize a lesson for teachers' professional growth or to prepare a school conference. This tasks allocation builds up our confidence, we feel valuable and our commitment to school goals is increased (Teacher, School 8).*

*The fact that I feel that my ideas are taken into account and everybody in the school respects me, I think is the most important motivation for a teacher or a deputy head in this school (Deputy head, School 8).*

The participative model of leadership that successful heads promoted in their schools, aimed to give opportunities to teachers to present and discuss their ideas to their colleagues and to collaborate, in order to reach the best decision for their schools. This section brings to light the ability of heads' to find ways of developing democratic procedures in a strong hierarchical system. The involvement of teachers in decision making in a climate of equality, justice and respect ensures that they care for the school, respect teachers as professionals and especially care for the best possible education of their students.



#### 6.4.2 Developing ownership

Through that model of decision making, successful heads attempted to build a democratic climate in their schools. According to the data, the second ingredient in the construction of a democratic climate was the development of a sense of ownership and a collective responsibility for school decisions (Nias et al., 1989; Leithwood et al., 1999; Fullan, 2001; Day, 2007; San Antonio, 2008). Being part of collective decision making, teachers seemed to develop feelings of responsibility and ownership. They worked harder to make their decisions true, and at the same time, they were highly motivated because they did what they really liked:

*She informs us of whatever happens in the school. I think, that as soon as we have an initiative, she lets us free to act. I like this way of working ... I work even harder every time I suggest an initiative and is taken into account either for my class or for the school (Teacher 2, School 6).*

Similarly, heads illustrated that:

*When teachers participate in decision making they work harder in order to make the goal happen; they get involved and work to achieve it. I think we are all geared towards that direction (Head, School 8).*

*The decisions in our school are taken collectively ... In this way, everybody feels responsible because he/she contributed in the decision process. The teachers feel that they are accountable and responsible (Head, School 6).*

This study, therefore, indicates the quality of successful heads to develop ownership.

By developing the feeling of ownership among staff, they achieved a powerful difference inside their school.

### 6.4.3 Equality, justice and respect

The third ingredient that arose from the data regarding the construction of a democratic climate was related to the great commitment of successful heads in being members of the staff group (Nias et al., 1989). Particularly, from the beginning of the school year they emphasized their belief for equality among all the staff (teachers and heads) as well as the participation of everybody in school decisions (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Lambert, 1998):

*I used to say to my teachers that we are all equal and I am the first among equals: 'we are going to operate this school by working all together. Success of the school will be success of all of us and failure will be the same ... we are all accountable and co-responsible' (Head, School 10).*

*I do not distinguish myself from my staff. The government appointed me at this position to lead this school ... but I am a member of the school staff and I reflect it through my work. I have some more responsibilities compared to the rest of the staff. For this reason, I think that by 'holding hands together' we can help the school. (Head, School 8).*

*There is absolute respect to their [teachers] personalities, opinions and needs. I see them as human beings, not only as professionals ... and they pay me back fivefold (Head, School 6)*

*I try to develop as a leader a climate, a norm, that does not separate the leader from the teachers. If we wish present this norm we could present it in the form of concentric rings. I try to bring together the two roles: teachers and head (Head, School 2).*

Along with the development of a sense of equality among people, heads promoted the establishment of the value of justice in order to develop a democratic climate (Nias et al., 1989). A sample of their quotes illustrated their beliefs:

*The head as coordinator has to coordinate people with justice. I am very strict with my self on this issue. I do not want my associates, to feel that I am biased; in case I favour some parents, a group of teachers or a group of children, then I will loose the game (Head, School 8).*

*A head should give opportunities to teachers to feel that they contribute to school leadership, to have equal opportunities to develop their skills and their initiatives (Head, School 9).*

The quality of heads' behaviour as a member of the staff group as well as their quality to be fair to people, appeared to increase the respect from teachers and parents towards them as leaders (Nias et. al., 1989; Mahony and Moos, 1998; Day and Leithwood, 2007). They built up positive feelings among the people. Particularly, teachers and parents reported:

*I feel that she is one of us. She is our head and we respect her, but she behaves and talks to us in a friendly way ... she shows that she is equal to us and this is important (Teacher 1, School 6).*

*I feel that we are equal that we speak in equal terms, professional to professional. This makes me feel very comfortable because he respects me ... he asks for my opinion. These facts make me happy (Teacher 1, School 7).*

*He is a very good associate ... we solve problems like friends do (Parent, School 5).*

*One positive characteristic of our head is that he tries to keep balances, in no case he appears to favour either teachers or students or their parents (Deputy head, School 8).*

*She never keeps secrets from her teachers ... you will never see her to discriminate her teachers ... or... to give responsibilities only to few of them. She will say 'Guys we have this subject, tell me how to face it' (Teacher 1, School 9).*

The building of a learning environment with the ideas of equality, justice and respect seemed to increase commitment to school goals among staff.

#### **6.4.4 Establishing communication networks**

The fourth ingredient that successful heads promoted in the construction of a democratic climate was related to the development of excellent interpersonal relationships with everybody involved in school procedures (Fullan, 2001; Ginsberg and Davies, 2003; Sugrue, 2005a; Leithwood et al., 2006). Particularly, they established communication networks. Based on their democratic values they

promoted dialogue and communication between the people of the external and internal school environment.

*I feel that our head is liberal and democratic. He allows us to discuss the different school issues and find solutions by ourselves. He does not push us, he listens to our arguments ... we decide all together ... we try to find a solution to problems all together. There is always a dialogue between us, he is flexible. He accepts our ideas ... he never pushes us to do what the Ministry representative says (Teacher 1, School 7).*

*Our head presents the issues for discussion to teachers during teachers' meetings and she gives emphasis on those issues that are related to teachers. By using her leading qualities and her critical thinking she encourages the teachers to present their opinion or their points of view. We discuss all possible ideas and perspectives (Deputy head, School 6).*

*She is a very democratic person; we take part in decision making. All decisions relating to school issues are discussed by all teachers before and we will all agree with the decisions and then we will proceed to their implementation (Teacher 1, School 9).*

*I want to be honest and fair with my colleagues. As soon as I notice a problem I try to solve it by discussing it (Head, School 9).*

#### **6.4.5 Good listeners**

The fifth ingredient that arose from the data regarding the construction of a democratic climate was related to the quality of successful heads to be very good listeners and very patient people (MacBeath, 1998; Moos et al., 2005). Teachers, parents and students felt that their head's door was always open for them to share their thoughts, worries and problems.

*He is democratic leader and listens to our opinion. He does not express his thoughts immediately. He does not speak too much and he is a person of few words. Sometimes he might have a different opinion but he waits. This practice helps us to think over an argument (Teacher 2, School 7).*

*She shows charity for parents, who might tell her impossible things and she always listens to them with patience (Teacher 2, School 2).*

Parents and students also supported the argument that heads listened carefully and discuss their problem with a lot of patience:

*Even though she is a very busy person, she always spares time to listen to parents. We always co-operate with her for the improvement of our school. We organize school events or meetings together (Parent, School 2).*

In a four country study of leadership (MacBeath, 1998) which examined the expectations of parents, students and teachers, the most consistent theme across national boundaries was the importance of listening and responsive leadership. Good leaders, as they underlined, care about student's voices and model a listening stance. In this study, the students' voice was informally part of the decisions.

#### **6.4.6 No pressure**

The last ingredient that successful heads inserted into the construction of a democratic climate was related to the feeling of freedom among the teachers (Morrison, 2002). There was ample evidence to suggest that there was no pressure from heads on their teachers. Heads favoured their teachers to feel free and make the planning of their lessons in such a way in order to be successful (Robinson, 2007). They respected them as professionals and trusted their abilities to do a successful job. The following quotation illustrated the beliefs of a head about freedom for her teachers:

*I hope that I influence them, consider them as my real associates and I do the best to make them feel happy and not under pressure (Head, School 9).*

In the same vein a teacher supported this in the sense that she felt she worked in a free and supportive environment, where personal freedom was respected.

*He let us work on our own and does not believe in the regular and persistent evaluation of his teachers. He is always at a distance but at the same time he is very constructive. This combination in a head is excellent because he creates a good school climate and we become very productive (Teacher 2, School 7).*

Similarly, the students also felt free to share their opinions during students' meetings:

*She gives us time to speak during students meeting ... we feel free to discuss any problem of our school ... we can visit her office and talk to her*  
(Student, School 6).

In conclusion, leading democratically is another piece of the puzzle which constructs the profile of successful heads in the Cyprus Educational System differently from those in other countries. Heads seemed to follow different approaches in order to establish a democratic climate in their schools. This climate helped to increase teachers' commitment and motivation to school goals. Despite the barriers that the hierarchical system tends to develop between heads and staff, successful heads moved beyond their expected role. They developed democratic practices which were related to their personal value systems. Particularly, they followed participatory approaches to decision making, developed practices that led to ownership, emphasized equality and justice among staff, created communication networks with everybody who was related to the school, listened to people around them and gave space to their teachers in order for them to be creative. Generally, successful heads distributed their power to the people around them.

Previous research shows the promotion of participative decision making as a feature of successful heads (Nias et al., 1989; Leithwood, 1999; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; San Antonio, 2008). A study conducted in Denmark, for instance, consisting of eight schools (primary and lower secondary) demonstrated that all successful leaders encouraged teachers' involvement in decision making. They all trusted teachers' teaching competences and they were all able to listen and communicate openly (Moos et al., 2005). Similarly, Hallinger and Heck (1999) in a

review of 42 studies that focus on leadership and its relationship to quantitative measures of school effectiveness and/or student achievement suggested that the greater involvement of stakeholders in decision making is a characteristic of higher-producing schools. Robinson (2007), reviewing 24 studies about the links between leadership and student success claimed that the leadership of high performing schools is judged by teachers to be significantly more successful than the leadership of low performing schools in protecting teachers from undue pressure from education officials and from parents.

The research findings of this study are similar with those of other researchers but differ, also, in important ways. In this study, the head teachers were leading democratically within the constraints and limitations of the centralized system. Although the system gives them superiority in all aspects of school life, they viewed their role without barriers and authority restrictions. They realized through their experience that by leading democratically (i.e. less autocratically) there would be more chances for the school to succeed. However, the relational character of democracy should not be ignored. The successful heads practices, in this study, should be seen through the definition of democracy in the Cyprus Education System (see Table 6.7: Successful Cypriot heads findings and their relationship with the international research

<b>Summary Table</b> <b>Themes, sub-themes and patterns</b>	
<b>6.2 Learning Heads</b>	
1. Self development 2. Heads' priorities and their experience	
<b>6.3 Similarities and differences of headship approaches and social context</b>	
1. Similarities of head strategies within the same SES 2. Similarities of heads strategies in leading the same school size	
<b>6.4 Leading democratically</b>	
1. Participatory approach 2. Developing ownership 3. Equality, respect, justice 4. Communication networks 5. Good listeners 6. No pressure	
<b>6.5 Rotation policy: a critique</b>	
1. School culture gets confused 2. Limited time for heads at a school 3. Lack of sensitivity to school needs	

Table 6.5: Summary Table: themes, sub-themes and patterns

In conclusion the cross case analysis that has been presented in the last two chapters – chapter five and chapter six - the findings showed that there are successful heads in the Cypriot Education System, despite the distractions of centralization, bureaucracy and the rotational policy. However, success is varying among successful heads. As we have discussed in the last two chapters (chapters five and six) there are similarities



and differences in their practices, skills and qualities which are clearly shown in the Table 6.6 (see Table 6.6: Similarities and differences of successful heads in urban primary schools of Cyprus).

In this part of the chapter I have discussed the third theme 'Leading democratically'. Particularly, I have discussed six strategies that successful heads followed to establish a democratic climate in their schools: participative approach, developing ownership, building equality, respect and justice, communication networks, good listeners and no pressure. In the final part of the chapter, I will discuss the fourth theme - 'Rotation policy: a critique' (see also Table 6.5: Summary Table: themes, sub-themes and patterns).

**Similarities and differences of successful head teachers  
in urban primary schools of Cyprus**

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on learning for all people around them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variation in learning approaches (due to community needs teachers' stage of readiness, students needs, heads experiences)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values-led leadership, give a moral dimension to their leadership, vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heads' characters (powerful, low-profile)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly humanitarian, show caring, emotional understanding and have person in the centre of their work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaching leadership differently because of their headship experience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set different priorities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop relationships with people around them – teachers, students, parents, stakeholders, community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaching leadership differently because of their headship tenure experience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passion for headship, strong commitment to their work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaching leadership differently because of the SES of their school</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Change fighters'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaching leadership differently because of school size</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrity people</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democratic people</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning heads</li> </ul>	

Table 6.6: Similarities and differences of successful head teachers in primary schools of Cyprus

## **6.5 Rotation Policy: A Critique**

The last theme that emerged from the data is related to the rotation of head teachers and teachers within the Educational System of Cyprus. The rotation policy in Cyprus is mainly based on the belief that everyone has the right to be close to his/her residence. In addition to that, there is also the argument that teachers and heads long service at a school has the consequence of boredom and lack of motivation.

There are only a few studies that examine heads rotation and provide insight into the process of leaders adaptation to their new settings and the effects on school staff (Macmillan, 1998; Macmillan, 2000; Hargreaves et al. 2003; Fink and Brayman, 2004). Actually, most of the studies were developed in Ontario - Canadian schools.

According to the data analysis for this study, all the heads seemed to be negatively influenced by the policy of moving teachers and heads around. This influence appears in the data at three different levels: first, the school culture gets confused in the sense that rotation effects the school that heads (and teachers) enter or leave. Second, there is a limited period of time that this policy allows heads to stay at the same school. Third, there is a lack of sensitivity in the policy in order to satisfy school needs.

### **6.5.1 School culture gets confused**

The first level of influence that appeared in the data was the confusion of the school culture which was created at the beginning of each academic year because a number of new teachers were appointed to the school (Macmillan, 1998). Of course, these new teachers needed some time as an induction period in order to familiarize themselves with the new school environment. All heads raised this issue many times

during their interviews because they seemed to be worried about the kind of teachers (years of experience, professional level, educational philosophy) that would be appointed each year at their school:

*I try to build and sustain a culture in this school; at short notice three teachers of my staff were appointed to another school and three replaced them. These new teachers came from different school cultures and they need time to adopt to the new environment. Of course, they always bring in new ideas which help us, but at the same time a lot of confusion is created (Head, School 3).*

*For example, at this school the yearly staff turnover is 2-5 out of 16. I can control this change but I had serious problems when I was at a small village school. The capacity of the whole school was 7 teachers and 4 of them were transferred (Head, School 5).*

*It is important to have transfers of new people in our school ... it is like a refreshment of our organization. However, this refreshment should be limited to 2-3 people in a school size of 20-25 teachers. If the staff changes then the school climate changes and we then need the whole school year to become familiar with each other. The new teachers need time to understand the school demands ... I need time to identify their potentials (Head, School 8).*

*The teachers' rotation influences schools because teachers need time to adapt to the school culture. Their productivity is not the same at the beginning of their appointment and after two to three years of experience in the same school (Head, School 9).*

Further, a deputy head, describing the first year of experience at her school, illustrated the confusion that people got into in their new environments. Her statement signified the necessity for help and support for new staff coming into schools every year, in order to adapt easily to the new culture:

*As soon as I came to this school I had difficulties to adopt my self to the new environment. Last year was the first time during my career when I worked with young students (6-8) because, in the past, I had worked only with the ages of 9-11. In addition, my colleagues could use contemporary teaching methods in their classrooms by using a lot of teaching materials and I felt in a disadvantageous position (Deputy head, School 7).*

This policy of rotating heads very regularly from one school to another creates problems for schools to. Teachers and parents, experienced the coming and going of different head teachers in their schools, and they reported that this kind of policy devitalised schools by confusing school culture and by developing a climate of insecurity and tiredness among staff (Macmillan, 2000).

*At the beginning of the school year we feel insecurity because we do not know what to expect from our new head. For example, what would be his/her expectations from the staff and what would be the type of relationship that s/he will develop with us (Teacher 2, School 1).*

*In addition, frequent changes of heads at schools make teachers feel insecurity (Deputy Head, School 10).*

Some parents emphasized their feelings of insecurity:

*I am worried about the next year's situation at our school. I have my concerns regarding the movement of our head. This head cares for our children, she is always next to her teachers advising them, directing them and knows how allocate their time. I am worried for next year's situation. How should I know who is s/he going to be and what kind of ideas might bring in education (Parent, School 1).*

In addition, heads themselves acknowledged the problems that their movement from school to school developed in school continuity. Particularly, a head believed that the policy which moves new heads to rural areas should change. According to her, a head could not have a significant contribution to a school and students' learning in only two years time:

*The Ministry's policy of regular teachers and heads rotation should stop ... Newly appointed heads moving to rural areas for two years do not have ample time to do many things. Two years is a very short period (Head, School 6).*

The disruption of school culture due to the policy of rotating teachers and head teachers created problems for school functions and in implementing new ideas and changing programmes.

### 6.5.2 Limited time for heads at a school

The second level of influence that appeared in the data was related to the limited tenure that heads experience at a school. They needed time to be familiarised with the environment of each school, to diagnose the needs and to set priorities. This policy seems to limit their efforts in implementing and developing the school goals. This piece of data is supported by the finding of Hallinger and Heck (1996) who mentioned that heads need a long period of time in order to establish a vision of shared goals with their staff.

*The policy of heads rotation has negative influences on heads. A head can not improve a school in only two years [she means the policy that forces heads to serve two years in rural schools]. I think a head needs at least five years at a certain school in order to help it progress (Head, School 3).*

The heads seemed to realize the disadvantages of this policy. So, they insisted that heads could not make the most of their abilities in two years in rural areas.

*I think I did not manage to finish what I have started at the rural area school. If I stayed at that school for 4 or 5 years the results would have been much better for the school as well as the community (Head, School 8).*

Heads knew that the time limit at a school was a maximum of five years, so they defined smaller goals and made shorter school plans. However, the passion, the love and commitment to their job made them hard workers. They spent a lot of their personal time and energy planning and organizing the school in order to make the adjustment more easily.

In conclusion, the policy of rotating head teachers around schools did not help them to develop successful schools, as heads experienced a variety of school context over their careers. They did not have the opportunity to stay for a long enough period of time at a school, to implement their ideas and sustain the results. This policy also

affected the self esteem of heads as they did not have the chance to see their long term goals accomplished. Nevertheless, successful heads found ways to adjust faster to their new schools and to set their priorities (Table 6.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationship and barriers). These findings seem to resonate with the international research findings. Macmillan (2000) found that school leaders need to understand and respect a schools culture before making changes that will affect it. In this sense they need time to experience and learn from it. These findings agree with Hargreaves et al. (2003) who found that where principals are achieving results, their tenure needs to be long enough-at least five years- to embed their improvements and themselves firmly into the culture of their schools.

### **6.5.3 Lack of sensitivity to school needs**

The third level of influence, as it appeared in the data, was the policy's lack of sensitivity to satisfy each school's needs regarding staff members. The MOEC clearly focused its attention on a mathematical rationale (number of teaching periods a school needs) by ignoring the actual needs of each school (quality of people, values and beliefs of teachers) in the process of moving teachers around. Although every year heads send analytical descriptions of their needs to the Ministry's officers, they ignored them. So, every September-at the beginning of the academic year- according to my experience as a teacher and based on the complaints from the teachers' union, there are staffing problems at most of the schools in Cyprus. Therefore, head teachers and teachers have difficulties developing school schedules and the schools planning on time:

*This year the policy of teachers' rotation around schools created a lot of problems to me because our school staff needs were not satisfied. For example, this year the music teacher was transferred to another school and none of the existing teachers can teach music. As a consequence at the*

*beginning of the academic year none of the staff wanted to teach music. That was a big problem for me in September ... At the end, I decided to take over most music lessons (Head, School 3).*

*Last year one of my teachers who was involved in an educational program called 'Melina'; was without noticed transferred from our school to some other school. The programme stopped since she was the leader of the programme (Head, School 6).*

*Neither heads nor school inspectors have any involvement in decisions that are related to their school staff transfers. The Ministry of Education's decisions do not take into consideration the existing school needs, the school climate or how the educational philosophies of some teachers fit to a school's vision (Deputy head, School 8).*

Further, the evidence showed that big changes in school staffing, brings down the school's annual plan.

*Of course the frequent rotation of heads influences schools and teachers because the school priorities are changing every time a new head is appointed to a school. They do not have ample time to communicate their vision to teachers or to inspire them. In addition, the frequent change of a head at a school makes teachers feels insecurity (Deputy Head, School 10).*

*The frequent rotation of heads and deputy heads does not contribute to school success. It is against the school goals and purposes. The heads need time to materialise their vision (Deputy head, School 6).*

Alongside the above, the data showed that the policy of moving teachers around totally ignored the special interests, previous experiences or any specialization of teachers and head teachers. In this way, their contribution to school goals did not achieve the maximization of their abilities:

*... For example, in this school one of my teachers is specialised in multicultural education. Although she could be able to contribute to a school with immigrants' students, the Ministry ignored her specialization and she was appointed in our school-which does not have any immigrants but it is next to her house (Head, School 10).*

*I believe that the personality of every individual teacher should be considered when she/he is transferred from one school to another in order to facilitate improvement of schools (Deputy head, School 8).*



In essence, the policy of moving heads around creates problems for heads, teachers and parents. It retards the development of school improvement projects by disrupting the school culture, by hindering the long run school planning, by contributing in decreasing the head teachers' motivation and by creating insecurity feelings to heads, teachers, parents and students. However, heads had learned to survive the regular rotation from school to school (Macmillan, 1998), and developed mechanisms to make the period of adjustment in new environments shorter.

## **6.6 Summary**

Table 6.7 is a synopsis of the findings that have been discussed above and shows how the work of successful Cypriot heads 'matches' with the research literature, how they overcome the problems of context and at what extent; and where appropriate, how they are limited by the context. Particularly, Table 6.7 illustrates that: (a) Successful Cypriot heads were learning heads despite the limitation of the context which provided no in-service education and limited support. They overcame this obstacle by studying by themselves the school leadership literature, by developing reflective practices and by adopting trial and error practices. This finding partly agree with the international findings as in the most Western countries heads (e.g. Australia, Finland, U.K., U.S.A.) have formal initial and in-service education as well as continual support from their educational authorities (Barth, 1990; Biott, Moos and Møller, 2001; Day, 2003a). (b) Successful Cypriot heads set different priorities during their early years at a school in comparison with their later years. They did not have the potential to fully materialize their priorities because of their limited tenures at schools (rotational policy, late appointment as heads). Despite the context barriers, they overcame them by developing quick adjustment abilities in new school environments. They set as

their priorities the development of relationships and the caring about students and teachers learning. The findings at the international level are related in some ways with the above findings (Reeves et al., 1997; Franey, 2002; Day, 2007). Although successful heads in Western countries develop similar priorities at the beginning of their tenure at a school with Cypriot heads, later in their careers they distribute their power to their teachers, a fact that is limited in Cyprus schools. (c) Successful Cypriot heads led democratically within the constraints and limitations of the centralized system. However, they viewed their role without authority restrictions and they followed participatory approaches in decision making. In addition, they emphasised equity, fairness and justice among staff, they created communication networks and gave space and time to people to develop their abilities. These findings agree to a certain extent with the international research findings because the meaning of democracy is defined differently from the one educational system to the other (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Moos et al., 2005). (d) Successful Cypriot heads had similarities and differences in their practices because they served schools with different social contexts and despite the fact that the Ministry of Education declares that it treats all schools in the same way (Harris and Chapman, 2002; Day, 2005a; Harris et al., 2006). (e) They had limited tenure at a school because of the rotation policy. This kind of policy created insecurity to heads, teachers and parents and disrupted school culture with the regular heads moving from school to school. Nevertheless, heads overcame these problems by developing mechanisms to adjust themselves quickly to new environments. These findings echo the international research literature (Macmillan, 1998, 2000).

**Summary Table**  
**Successful Cypriot heads: relationships and barriers (2)**

Successful Cypriot heads	Successful heads in literature (matches or not)	To what extent	How Cypriot heads overcome the problems	How they are limited by context
• Learning heads	Partly agree with the international findings (Barth, 1990; Biott, Moos and Møller, 2001; Day, 2003a).	Build their careers on experience and intuition.	Study leadership books by themselves. Develop trial and error practices. Develop reflective practices by experience. Have passion, enthusiasm and commitment to their job.	No in-service education. No support from the MOEC. MOEC keeps them isolated.
• Heads' priorities and their experience	Partly agree with the international findings (Reeves et al., 1997; Franey, 2002; Day, 2007).	They confined themselves in developing relationships, caring about students and teachers learning. Distributed leadership is not one of their priorities.	Quick adjustment to new environments.	Short tenure limited experience. Lack of appropriate professional support.
• Leading democratically	Partly agree with the international findings (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Moos et al., 2005).	View their role without barriers and authority restrictions.	Follow participatory approaches in decision making. Emphasised equity, justice among staff. Created communication networks. Listen to people. Give space to people.	Constraints and limitations of centralized system.
• Similarities and differences of headship approaches and social context	Similar findings (Harris and Chapman, 2002; Day, 2005a; Harris et al., 2006).		They put different priorities and develop different strategies.	The Ministry policies deal in the same way all the schools.
• <i>Rotation policy</i>	Similar findings (Macmillan, 1998, 2000).	Creates insecurity, decreasing heads motivation, disrupting school culture.	Develop mechanism to adjust in new environments shorter.	Rotation policy

Table 6.7: Successful Cypriot heads: relationship and barriers

## 6.7 Discussion

This study showed that a number of processes in successful leadership situations are context-bound. The context –social and national context- has a real influence on the way successful heads developed their practices. Although there were many similarities in the way successful heads in Cyprus approached leadership in their schools, in many cases the data showed that they differentiated their practices (Table 6.6: Similarities and differences of successful head teachers in primary schools of Cyprus). On the one hand they developed a context sensitive leadership by setting different priorities for a variety of reasons like the school size, the SES of parents, the developmental phase of the school, the community needs, teachers' stage of readiness, the experience of head and the tenure of head at the school. Successful headship actions were based on the particular school conditions and situation. On the other hand, the national context characteristics and specifically the influences of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus seemed to be a factor that differentiated Cypriot heads practices from their colleagues in Western countries. At the same time all successful heads in the study were values-led, strongly humanitarian; they clearly communicated their vision and developed healthy relationships with people. Learning for all the people in the school was their priority. The school goals became reality because of their hard work, passion and great commitment to their job. In order to serve schools to the best of their ability, in difficult and complex situations, they acted as reflective practitioners and were authentic in their leadership practices. In this way, they understood the schools reality, set achievable goals and gave meaning to their actions.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **GROUPINGS OF HEADS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Studying successful heads in the educational context of Cyprus, showed that they demonstrated similar sets of skills, qualities and practices which are named as 'core practices' (Leithwood et al., 2006). Some of those practices varied in intensity because of heads' priorities due to the specific school context. Based on those differences in emphasis, I clustered heads into four groups: (a) emphasis on high organizational profile, (b) emphasis on leading democratically, (c) emphasis on learning-centred leadership and (d) emphasis on moral and emotional leadership (Table 7.1: Group of cases). It is important to say that all heads followed strategies and practices that could be included in all four groups (see Figure 7.1: The four groups). Nevertheless, they emphasised particular practices because of their priorities, school SES, school size, and head teacher experience. In this chapter, I will present each of heads groupings and at the same time I will illustrate the profile of the heads which it consists of, based on the data collected during shadowing.

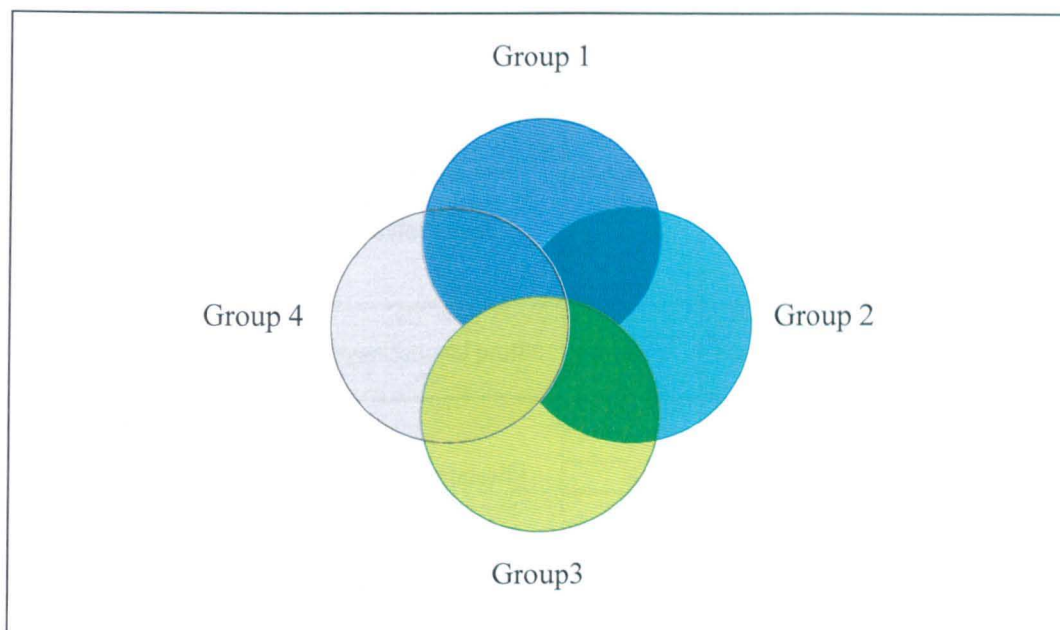


Figure 7.1: The four groups

## 7.2 Heads Profiles Groupings

In chapters five and six I discussed the similarities and differences between successful heads. Specifically, the data showed that they developed similar skills, qualities and practices but used them in different ways according to the needs of the particular school in which they worked. Trying to understand better those heads practices in context, I found that they could be clustered in four groups, although it is important to emphasize that all developed similar core practices also. The groups emerged at a specific time and context. The grouping was complex, non-linear and there were overlaps among the strategies emphasised. For this reason, some heads were put into two groups. Table 7.1 (below) shows the strategies and practices emphasised that successful heads developed during the period of time that this study's fieldwork took place.

GROUPS OF CASES					
Groups	Main strategies and practices in emphasis by successful heads	Case number	School size	SES	Years of head at present school (total years in headship)
Group 1	High organisational profile	1	Medium	High	2(4)
		2	Large	Middle	3(5)
Group 2	Leading democratically	6	Medium	High	2(4)
		7	Small	Middle	2(4)
		8	Large	Middle	2(4)
		9	Medium	High	3(5)
		10	Large	Middle	2(5)
Group 3	Learning-centred leadership	1	Medium	High	2(4)
		3	Small	Low	6(6)
		5	Large	Low	5(7)
		6	Medium	High	2(4)
Group 4	Moral and emotional leadership	3	Small	Low	6(6)
		6	Medium	High	2(4)
		8	Large	Middle	2(4)
		9	Medium	High	3(5)

Table 7.1: Groups of cases

### 7.2.1 Group 1: High organizational profile-delegating (N: 1, 2)

Group one consists of head one and head two, who were clustered together because they developed a high organizational profile in their practices (Table 7.2: High organizational profile).

High organizational profile										
Skills and qualities	Cases	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Well Organized/control	✓**	✓**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Delegation/give responsibilities	✓**	✓**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
	Specific deadlines (pressure)	✓**	✓**	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 7.2: High organizational profile

- \* More the stars greater the emphasis.
- The referred group

7.2.1.1 The profile of head one

The head in case one is a female head aged 54 years old and has served as a head for four years, two of which were at this school. She had 31 years of experience as a teacher and three years as a deputy head –for two of which she was a substitute head. The school she led was a primary school (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grades) and it was on the same site as the primary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia far from its centre. It consisted of 234 students and 15 teachers including two deputy heads. The school could be characterized as high SES school because most of the students in the school came from highly educated families with high incomes.

7.2.1.2 The profile of head two

Case two was a female head teacher and she was 56 years old. She had 34 years of experience in Cyprus primary schools. She served 26 years as a teacher, three years as a deputy head and five years as a head teacher. She has been the head teacher of this school for the last three years. The school she led was a primary school (1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and not far from its centre. It



consisted of 287 students and 20 teachers, including two deputy heads. The majority of students who attended this school came from upper middle SES families as their parents were well educated and with well respected job. The school was located in a new building, just three years old. She had been the head of this school since it opened. As she reported, she faced a big challenge in organizing the school, to find the budget in order to buy resources and to build a school culture that would link together teachers, students, parents and the community.

### **7.2.1.3 Group one**

Both heads, one and two, emphasised school organization. They followed a very clear time schedule and they were analytical in delegating responsibilities to their deputy heads and teachers. For example, during shadowing I saw head one delegated responsibilities to her staff –teachers and deputy heads- by giving them short notes every morning. In addition to that, the responsibilities of deputy heads<sup>1</sup> were clearly shared (between the two deputy-heads) and put up on a notice-board. Further, I saw head two calling a morning meeting -before lessons started- in order to organize her staff for the forthcoming school activities. She confirmed that everybody knew his/her responsibility and that the processes would work well.

Heads of group one were exceptionally hard working people, spending a lot of time organizing their schools. When I was shadowing head two, I saw her stay at school until 3.30 – 4.00 o'clock in the afternoon, whereas the lessons finished at 1.05. She preferred to do phone-calls and co-ordination with stakeholders after school finished, instead of during school time. As both heads underlined they spent most of their

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<sup>1</sup> According to the regulations deputy heads do not have specific responsibilities. The heads are responsible to give them responsibilities.

personal time preparing and getting organized for the next day. They kept an analytically prepared agenda for each day and reflected on it – e.g. what we achieved, what we did not achieve and in which area we need improvement.

Both head teachers developed a heavy schedule for classroom and school activities which were constituted sources of pressure for teachers and students. I observed school activities at both schools, in which head teachers had a central role in the organization of those activities. Teachers were mainly in supporting roles. Eventually they managed to change things at the school, making it a lively and active learning environment with links to the local environment. They both sought to have the main role and control of the schools activities. For example, the week that I visited the school two, the head with her staff, prepared a multicultural Christmas celebration. They invited two schools which had different cultures and traditions. The purpose was to give students and their parents the chance to experience other cultures and sing songs together – either in their own language or in Greek. Mothers and grad-mothers from all three schools prepared traditional sweets in the school. The head of the school had the main organizational role because she was wanted to make sure even the smallest detail was correct. She controlled all the activities related to that particular celebration.

Head one and two put emphasis on organization in practicing leadership, because of the specific school contexts. Both attempted to have control over school activities as they were interested in the school's good reputation. They cared strongly about the messages the schools sent to the community and parents through the school activities. Particularly, head two who was at a newly founded school, so she tried to develop a

good reputation for her school. Similarly, head one tried to change the moderate reputation of the school that previous heads had developed and to ensure that the community and the MOEC knew that she, her staff and students did an excellent job. Hence, the school context had a central role in the adoption of school strategies that head teachers followed.

### 7.2.2 Group 2: Leading democratically (N: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

Group two places emphasis on leading democratically and it was adopted by heads six, seven, eight, nine and ten (Table 7.3: Leading democratically).

Leading democratically										
Skills and qualities	Cases	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Participatory approach	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓**
	Developing ownership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Equality, respect, justice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓**
	Communication networks	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓
	Good listeners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	No pressure	-	-	-	-	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*

Table 7.3: Leading democratically

#### 7.2.2.1 The profile of head six

Case six was a female head teacher, 54 years old. She had 31 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. She served 24 years as a teacher, four years as a deputy head and four years as a head teacher. She had been the head teacher of this school for the last two years. She had served as a teacher for eight years in this school, before her promotion to the position of the deputy head. She was well known by parents and stakeholders and it was easy for her to open communication and develop collaboration with them. The school she led was a primary school (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grades). It was

located in an urban area of Nicosia and not far from its centre. It consisted of 250 students and 16 teachers, including two deputy heads. The school could be characterized as high SES school because the most of the students in the school came from highly educated families with high economic incomes.

#### **7.2.2.2 The profile of head seven**

Case seven was a male head teacher and he was 56 years old. He had 33 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. He served 26 years as a teacher, three years as a deputy head and four years as a head teacher. He had been the head teacher of this school for the last two years. The school he led was a primary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and far from its centre. It consisted of 141 students and 10 teachers, including two deputy heads. The majority of students who attended this school came from medium socioeconomic backgrounds and there were 2-3 international students in each of the classes.

#### **7.2.2.3 The profile of head eight**

Case eight was a male head teacher who was 54 years old. He had 29 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. He served 21 years as a teacher [three years of which he was seconded to the MOEC and worked as a ministry officer], four years as a deputy head and four years as a head teacher. He had been the head teacher of this school for the last two years. However, he had worked in this school as a teacher and as a deputy head. His previous experience at the school and the fact that he has lived in the community for years helped him know the students, the parents and the stakeholders. His academic qualification was a Bachelor Degree in Education, a Bachelor Degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor degree in Political Science.

Within the last two years he attended Masters' classes at the Greek Open University. The school he led was a primary school (1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and far from its centre. It consisted of 329 students and 20 teachers, including three deputy heads. The majority of students came from the upper middle SES with well educated parents.

#### **7.2.2.4 The profile of head nine**

Case nine was a female head teacher 55 years old. She had 34 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. She served 26 years as a teacher, three years as a deputy head and five years as a head teacher. She had been the head teacher of this school for the last three years. However, she had worked as a teacher for eight consecutive years. The school she led was a primary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and not far from its centre. It consisted of 183 students and 11 teachers, including two deputy heads. The majority of students who attended this school came from families with high SES.

#### **7.2.2.5 The profile of head ten**

Case ten was a male head teacher 54 years old. He had 29 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. He served 21 years as a teacher, three years as a deputy head and five years as a head teacher. He had been the head teacher of this school for the last 2 years. His academic qualification was a Bachelor Degree in Education and a Degree in Law. The school he led was a primary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and far from its centre. It consisted of 300 students and 17 teachers, including two deputy heads. The majority of students who attended this school came from a medium socioeconomic background.

#### **7.2.2.6 Group two**

Heads number six, seven, eight, nine and ten constitutes the second group who placed the emphasis on leading their schools democratically (see Chapter 6 for the term democratic).

Although the heads of this group had the power to decide by themselves about the different school matters, they promoted dialogue and discussion procedures in decision making and in solving school problems. Particularly, during a students' assembly (School 6), I observed students announce the problems that they faced in the school. The head teacher and the teachers listened to those problems with respect and they suggested ways to solve them. Head, teachers and students seemed to endeavour to find the best solution for students and their school. Moreover, the five heads of this group, engaged their staff in decision making, mainly in the decisions that were closely related to them. When I was shadowing head seven, during a staff meeting, I saw teachers become very motivated after their decision to participate in a programme regarding emotional education. Almost all of the teachers appeared to be interested in the programme and they had found books and relevant resources that would help them in the development of their ideas. In addition, during a staff meeting at school eight, teachers split into groups to discuss certain themes of interest and then they joined the whole group to announce their decisions. For example, when I was shadowing head eight I saw him handling a student's behavioural problem through following democratic processes. He discussed the particular problem with his teacher, with the deputy head, the student and finally with his parents. All of them tried to find a solution in order to solve the student's problem behaviour.

Furthermore, during shadowing head number ten, I observed him as a member of a team, during a toy recycling school activity. Some teachers had active roles and one of them was the leader of the activity. The teachers' motivations, passion and commitment for what they were doing were obvious. The head felt proud of his teachers and their leading qualities, he repeatedly mentioned to me that they were very capable and gifted teachers.

Heads six, seven, eight, nine and ten tried not to put pressure on their staff. They empowered their staff to lead according to their expertises and interests and achieved an environment in which teachers were very committed without feeling pressured. Their staff reported that they felt freedom and security to develop their ideas. During shadowing head eight, a fifth grade teacher came into his office and discussed with him a new idea for approaching students. The teacher was inspired by the concept of students' books and suggested his students 'teach' second graders by telling them a story. The head was clearly positive with about his idea and supported him in collaborating with his colleagues in order to make it happen. In addition, this group of heads, as the previous ones were, were visible in their school. I observed them as they walked around the school, engaged people in discussions, and listened to them, giving them time to express themselves while at the same time supporting them.

7.2.3 Group 3: Learning-centred leadership approaches (N: 1, 3, 5, 6)

Group three emphasised learning-centred approaches and encompasses heads one, three and five (Table 7.4: Learning-centred leadership approaches).

Learning-centred leadership approaches										
	Cases	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
Skills and qualities	Modelling	✓*	✓	✓*	✓**	✓*	-	✓*	✓	✓
	Monitoring and mentoring	✓**	-	✓**	✓**	✓**	-	✓	✓	-
	Peer coaching	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-
	Collaboration among teachers	-	-	✓*	-	-	✓*	-	-	-
	Risk taking	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*
	Capacity building	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
	Induction of newcomers	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-
	Monitoring students learning	✓**	✓	✓**	✓*	✓**	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Caring for academic-social goals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓
	Being visible	✓*	✓*	✓*	-	✓	✓	✓*	✓	-
	Protection of teaching time	-	-	✓*	✓*	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
	Praising students	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓*	✓
	Creating a learning environment	✓*	✓*	✓**	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*	✓

Table 7.4: Learning-centred leadership approaches

7.2.3.1 The profile of head one

See the profile of this head in group one.

7.2.3.2 The profile of head three

Case three was a female head teacher, 58 years old. She had 36 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. She served 29 years as a teacher, three years as a deputy head and six years as a head teacher. She had been the head teacher of this school for the last six years. Her academic qualification was a Bachelor Degree. The school she led was a primary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and not far from its centre. It consisted of 146 students and 9 teachers, including the deputy head, the special teacher and the speech therapist. The majority



of students who attended this school came from a low disadvantaged socioeconomic background and a significant percentage (%) of them were children of immigrants.

#### **7.2.3.3 The profile of head five**

Case five was a male head teacher, 59 years old and he retired in August 2006. He had 37 years of experience in Cypriot primary schools. He served 26 years as a teacher, four years as a deputy head and seven years as a head teacher. He had been the head teacher of this school for the last five years. His academic qualification was a Bachelor Degree and a certification for his attendance at a three month seminar regarding curriculum development. The school he led was a primary school (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grades). It was located in an urban area of Nicosia and far from its centre. It consisted of 272 students and 16 teachers, including two deputy heads. The majority of students who attended this school came from a low disadvantaged socioeconomic background because the school was very close to a so called ‘refugees’ neighbourhoods’. The building of the school was on the same site as three other schools: a primary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grades), a pre-primary school and a junior high.

#### **7.2.3.4 The profile of head six**

See the profile of this head in group 2.

#### **7.2.3.5 Group three**

Heads one (case one presented in group one), three, five and six were the most experienced heads in the sample and they put great emphasis on teachers’ development and students learning. Although all the heads of the sample developed learning-centred leadership in their practices, only this group had learning as their

priority. They considered themselves as good teachers and were prepared to have a main role in developing a programme of staff development in their schools. Thus, they adopted a repertoire of strategies to help their staff. For example, they prepared a schedule for teacher development within the school by using modelling, peer coaching, monitoring and mentoring, providing resources and they built teaching capacity. During shadowing I observed head one visiting a classroom –after the teacher’s invitation –and observed a social studies lesson. At the end of the lesson she discussed it with the teacher by mentioning its positive aspects and by making some suggestions for improvement. In addition to that, I observed head one give advice to a substitute teacher on how to manage the classroom and how to check students’ homework. Head three spent a big part of her time close to her teachers discussing their planning and advising them on how to achieve better results.

Moreover, heads one, three, five and six always cared about students’ achievement by being constantly informed of their learning difficulties, improvements and needs. Collaborating with their staff, they searched for new methods and activities in order to help students to improve. I saw head three discussing with her teachers about the improvement of certain students. She wanted to know about the achievement and the behaviour level of those students. They made suggestions in order to help them improve in both sectors/areas. In addition, she advised a novice teacher how to teach a particular subject in music and she collaborated with teachers to design a forthcoming project. Teachers seemed to trust and admire her abilities. Further, I observed head five visiting classrooms and helping teachers to cope with difficulties that they faced during teaching. For example, a teacher invited her head into her class room in order

to demonstrate an alternative method of teaching fractions. He accepted the invitation and the students seemed to be used to these kinds of visits from their head.

### 7.2.4 Group 4: Moral and emotional leadership (N: 3, 6, 8, 9)

Group four consists of heads three, six, eight and nine who were clustered together because they emphasised moral and emotional leadership in their practices (see Table 7.5: Moral and emotional leadership). They were described by their staff and parents as low profile people, having smooth-tempered characters and conciliatory spirit. All of the cases have been described in the previous sections of this chapter.

Moral and emotional leadership										
Skills and qualities	Cases	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Loyalty and commitment	-	✓*	✓**	-	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*	-
	Trust and respect	✓*	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓*	✓**	✓**	✓**
	Moral Support	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓*	✓
	Care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓*	✓**	✓

Table 7.5: Moral and emotional leadership

Although successful heads were under pressure and had many responsibilities during school day, they were constantly sensitive to the needs and problems of teachers and students. I saw these heads emotionally support and care about their teachers and students. For example, during shadowing head eight, a parent complained about a teacher. Particularly, he (the parent) had a different perspective about the way the teacher taught a language lesson. The head supported the professional profile of his teacher and the high quality of her work. After that he informed her about the incident and she seemed to be worried. He underlined to her in different tones that he would be close to her and he would support her. In addition, head teacher six always took care

of students' little accidents or illness. I saw her giving them first-aid after an accident in the school yard or when they felt sick. During those incidents she showed her moral support by talking to them. Students seemed to trust her and always wanted her to take care of them. Furthermore, head eight invited some students into his office several times. He cared about the students' feelings and emotions, and not only about their academic success. He invited them privately to his office, listening and having discussions with them. Head nine also developed very similar qualities. After each discussion with students about their behaviour, I saw her offering them handmade little hearts –she made them- as a souvenir. She always expressed her feelings to students, teachers and other people that she met. For example, she said: 'You are helping me a lot. You are relieving my work-load'.

These heads communicated their personal values and beliefs to teachers and students by emphasizing modelling and by using dialogue and discussion. Despite the large size of some of their schools, they preferred face-to-face communication with students in their office.

According to my observation data, successful heads supported their staff to find creative ways of thinking, while they avoided offering ready made solutions during discussions. For instance, through the planning of the project about health education, head three supported her staff in expressing their ideas and the possible ways that their project could expand, despite her own preparation and reading on the theme. At the end of the discussion the planning was an intermixture of teachers' ideas and proposals. In addition to that, head nine advised her teachers to do 'what they consider as positive for their students'.

Those four successful heads placed great emphasis on the moral and emotional dimension of leadership. They were deeply committed to the growth of each individual on a personal, professional and spiritual level. They were constantly modelling their values and beliefs and communicating them by engaging others in a dialogue.

### 7.3 Summary

Summary table Heads and groups	
Group 1: High organizational profile	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> </div>
Group 2: Leading democratically	<div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> </div>
Group 3: Learning-centred leadership	<div> <div>1</div> <div>3</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> </div>
Group 4: Moral and emotional leadership	<div> <div>3</div> <div>6</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> </div>

Table 7.6: Heads and groups

The Table 7.6 above shows in summary form the four groups of heads that have emerged from the analysis of this study and the relationships among them. It illustrates a range of leadership approaches in emphasis by heads during the period of time that this study took place. These approaches form a part of Cypriot heads’ practices under specific conditions. Particularly, Table 7.6 demonstrates that: head 6 (blue line) used three different leadership approaches in emphasis; head 1 (pink line), head 3 (green line), head 8 (red line) and head 9 (purple line) employed two

leadership approaches in emphasis and heads 2, 5, 7, 10 used only one leadership approach in emphasis. However, there are no patterns which can be seen in this table. This is an interesting finding as it illustrates that heads do not follow 'recipes' in their leadership practices and they do not adopt practices that are alien to school contexts. In this respect the heads employed a variety of leadership approaches during their tenure at a school in order to be in harmony with school contexts and to satisfy the teachers, parents and students needs. The evidence from this table, therefore, indicates that heads practices are strongly influenced by the specific school context within the limitations of the Cypriot Educational System.

Looking at the evidence at Table 7.6, a popular approach in emphasis among the successful heads of the sample emerged to be the 'leading democratically' (N: 5). Heads seem to overcome the hierarchical and rational restrictions that embedded by the system and they became innovative; they gave opportunities for leading to their staff and the right to decide by themselves about the most school matters. Additionally, the group of 'moral and emotional leadership' (N: 4) seems to be related to the 'leading democratically' group as three of its heads employed both approaches. This shows the strong need among Cypriot people (teachers, students and parents) for developing relationships, exchanging ideas, communicating, feeling trusted and respected and in general to be respected as individual personalities and not as faceless subjects. It could be said that this need is an extension of the Cypriot national culture. As we have discussed before (see Chapter 2) due to the small size of the island people know each other or they are connected in a way with each other. The national culture, therefore, has an important influence on the leadership approaches that heads follow. In this sense, the school heads need to be able to draw on a wide repertoire of possible

strategies and approaches which changes and develops over time and is shaped by culture and school context (as we have discussed in the above paragraph).

In essence, the analysis of the data lead to four main factors that influence the successful head teachers' practices in Cyprus and might be elsewhere: (a) the school context (SES, size), (b) the national culture (c) the head teachers' experience (see section 6.2.2) and (d) the head teachers values and beliefs. It seems that they feel confident to better understand their role in school and in community the same time to better understand people and their needs. Successful heads took their own personal informed risks (make choices) in order to follow strategies and approaches that fit to the context.

#### **7.4 Discussion**

An important issue that emerges from this study is that a key element in understanding successful leadership practices is the interrelationships between the head teachers experiences and the specific school context. Successful heads followed a range of strategies which were based on a complex combination between their schools needs and their previous experiences. Hallinger (2003) also reminds us that 'in a very real sense the leader's behaviours are shaped by the school context' (p. 346). Further, Macmillan (1998) found in a small study the level of experience of a head has an impact on his/her leadership. These findings show that head teachers experiences and the particular school circumstances, cannot be ignored in studying leadership and in developing head teachers.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS:**

### **SUCCESSFUL HEADSHIP LEADERSHIP IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CYPRUS**

#### **8. 1 Introduction**

The central concern of this thesis has been to examine what makes heads successful in primary schools in Cyprus and the factors involved (school size, school SES, head teachers experience) which influence their practices in these times of change. This chapter discusses the main findings of the study, reflects on the limitations of the study, makes recommendations for further research and presents conceptual understanding of the researcher's role.

The study is the largest of its kind in Cyprus. It is the first ethnographic study on successful head teachers in the urban areas of Cyprus and it is the only one that combines observational data with investigations of the perceptions of heads and others' their ability to achieve success within the existing rotational policy. It adds to the currently limited local leadership literature research and it creates a framework for further research into successful leadership in Cyprus. A number of themes emerged from the data analysis which confirm the international research literature and at the same time go beyond it in particularizing the influence of context upon the nature, purposes and processes of successful headship. In this chapter I will first discuss the findings which confirm the existing knowledge on leadership and then those findings



which add to the existing knowledge. Secondly, I will discuss how the evidence supports the argument that the notion of leadership in a changing world may be informed by complexity theory. Thirdly, some suggestions for further research will be presented and finally I will reflect on the limitations of this study.

## **8.2 Leadership: no single model**

Figure 8.1 demonstrates successful headship leadership in Cyprus and reveals its multi-dimensional character. It shows the influences on leadership, the interrelated and interpenetrative values and strategies that constitute the elements for achieving the school purposes through the differentiation of leadership. In essence, of this figure reveals that the successful heads in Cyprus did not follow any recipe in their journey towards improvement. The journey was differentiated from school to school and from one head teacher to another in the range, the intensity and the time that each of the practices-strategies and values took place. In this sense, this study confirms the important role of head teacher leadership in schools and its potential for creating and maintaining successful schools.

### **8.2.1 Findings which confirm the existing research findings**

#### **8.2.1.1 Value-driven leadership**

This research provides evidences and richer understanding of the values of successful heads in the particular context. Specifically, it found that in small societies (under one million people), like Cyprus, where the religion and family bonds are very strong, heads' practices were based on deep commitment to those personal values and created moral bonds with people around them mainly in schools (see section 5.2). These

bonds influence their leadership practice and make their purpose to achieve change easier.

Heads were always value-driven in leading their schools. As I discussed in Chapter 1 'leaders relied on their values to guide their actions' (Dempster and Mahony, 1998:125) and the moral purpose of the school was based upon heads' values and beliefs (Day et al., 2001b). The study reveals that values were central to the head's leadership, had mainly been developed in their early years and that they were the result of religion and family values (personal histories) (see Chapter 7). They learned to have integrity, to respect and love other people and passed these on to others. These values influenced and directed the formation of a unified vision (the purpose and direction of school) for their school through the use of words and actions and by developing communication networks. For example, according to the data, heads repeated phrases such as 'our school', 'our project', 'I entrust my teachers' and 'I know that my teachers do their job very well'. Through these practices they emphasised collaboration among the staff and a common purpose rooted in mutual trust and respect.

The heads in the study constantly communicated their vision with teachers and parents at every occasion. The sharing of their beliefs and ideas gave the signal to people 'what is important in their school' and they had a sense of 'what is of value' (see section 5.2). All the teachers participating in the study confirmed that they experienced a common vision with their head, that they were working for the same purposes and that they were moving in the same direction (see section 5.2). They also reported that their commitment and loyalty to school goals had increased. In this

sense, heads provided moral leadership and moral authority (Sergiovanni, 2001). According to Etzioni (1988) the moral authority is related to morality, emotion and social bonds that are far more powerful motivators than the extrinsic motivators (e.g. merit pay for increased performance, positive reinforcement for good work). Their practices demonstrated basic values such as integrity, fairness, justice, respect and mutual trust (see sections 5.2; 6.3). This means that they had the ability to manage tensions by finding the balance between the expectations of the bureaucratic system (see Chapter 3) and the expectation of their own value system. Although all the heads in the study respected the rules and regulations of the Ministry, they were close to the needs of their students and teachers; they acted as a 'buffer' every time the external environment threatened their schools (see sections 5.3; 6.3).

Based on the above discussion, this study confirms the findings of other empirical research that leadership is a value-driven notion (Day et al. 2000; Gold et al., 2003; Day and Leithwood, 2007). One of the heads' job in Cyprus and elsewhere is to share values and help others (teachers and students) to involve those values in their day-to-day experiences. In other words, they provide the conditions and support teachers to be creative in the framework of those values. As I will discuss later in this chapter, leadership values are at the heart of leadership of successful heads in Cyprus and are strongly influenced by the principles of Greek Orthodox Church (see section 8.2.2.1.3). Figure 8.1 shows the relationships of heads' strong moral values with the key strategies of successful leadership. In this sense, successful heads place a central emphasis on their communication of values to their teachers, students and parents.

### **8.2.1.2 Relationships and moral leadership**

A second major finding of this research is the importance of moral leadership in developing relationships. Heads during moral leadership approaches focus on value-laden activities in order to develop attitudes and bonds within the people (teachers, students). The heads of this study, have a strong religious-social background, focusing on people and their welfare in schools (see Chapter 7 and the biographies of head teachers). Although they showed respect for the hierarchical, rule bound educational system, they were strongly influenced by their individual value systems (personal, social, educational values) (see Chapter 5). Successful heads in this study articulated their values and beliefs and constituted a starting point for the development of their relationships with the people around them (teachers, students, parents, stakeholders) (see sections 5.2 and 5.3.3). On the one hand, they created a sense of direction, set the purposes of the school and were committed to the achievement of those purposes. For example, all of the heads were modelling goals and behaviours, and empowered others. They were visible in the school, visited classrooms regularly, discussed their vision with students and teachers, and promoted participative approaches in decision making and showed respect and informed trust for the professional abilities of their staff (see section 5.2.3). People (teachers, students, parents), on the other hand, learned what was valued by the leader and they shared meaning. These facts lead people connect to each other and find their lives useful and valued. In many cases, teachers and parents of the study reported that, in their school, they felt important and they fought together to achieve the school goals. In short, the development of relationships among people and the communication of vision and beliefs by heads, resulted in creating moral bonds among people (teachers and teachers and teachers

and head, students and teachers, students and head). In this sense, the findings of this study confirm the knowledge that leadership practices increase individual and relational trust which is found to facilitate school improvement (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Louis 2007; Day et al., 2009) and activated peoples intrinsic motives by raising the level of commitment and performance (see sections 5.2; 5.3; 6.4).

#### **8.2.1.3 Emotions in leadership**

Leaders perceived leadership as person-centred rather than task-centred. For example, all the heads demonstrated understanding of their staff and students problems and repeatedly helped them to overcome them. In addition, they created a school environment in which people felt accepted, respected and loved (see section 5.2). This type of leading was reciprocal, the more heads cared about their teachers and students the more teachers and students cared about the school matters (see section 5.2.3).

Beatty and Brew (2000) and Hargreaves et al. (2001) argue that the sharing of emotions forms positive relationships between people. In this sense, trust, loyalty and commitment were developed and helped heads to more easily communicate their core values and ideas, and to share their vision with their staff (see section 5.2.3; 5.3.3).

People (teachers and students) were highly committed to the specific heads rather to the Ministry's goals. Emotional leadership, then, creates and supports moral bonds between people, an issue which is essential to successful change processes (Sergiovanni, 2001).

This view of heads emerged through their qualities of caring, emotional understanding and emotional work (see sections 5.2.2; 5.2.3; 5.3.3). For example, all the heads of the study were personally interested in the problems of people around them. They offered

them their advice and their emotional and moral support. Further, the people in the study reported that successful heads formed positive relationships within their schools. The heads role was to ensure the development of relationships among people (teachers, students and parents), including those who raised objections. The building of relationships in schools was essential as they contributed to enhancing a climate of trust and respect in the schools (see section 5.2.1).

#### **8.2.1.4 Leadership Commitment**

This study has also revealed that commitment is an important quality of successful head teachers. The success of the heads in this study was based on their passion for their job and on their great commitment to their vision (see section 5.2). In previous sections of this chapter, I have discussed how heads become successful in referring to democratic, values, possesses of leadership distribution, morality and emotions. These notions seem to be related very strongly to commitment. Although the Ministry's regulations created barriers to the progress of their work, all the heads of the study committed themselves to constantly be loyal to their vision, to follow democratic processes in decision making, to respect and trust people as individuals (and professionals), to care and support learning in their school (see Chapters 5 and 6). In other words they 'take their job seriously' and 'feel a loyalty for the whole school' (Nias, 1989:30).

While the conditions of successful heads' work were not perfect, in terms of systematic professional development and instability of the school environment (due to the Ministry's rotational policy), the findings indicated that they showed great commitment to their job. They were dedicated to what they were doing (see sections

5.2; 6.2). For instance, they adopted mechanisms of self-development in order to help them face the complexities of their job. One more sign of their commitment was their enthusiasm for the job and the people with whom they work (Day, 2004). For example, all heads worked very hard and spent a lot of their personal time preparing and organizing school work in order to save time during the school day. In this sense, they were available to their teachers, students, parents and stakeholders to discuss their problems, to discuss and find solutions for students' achievement and to help them personally and professionally. This involves maintaining a dynamic through supporting others; what has been described as 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf, 1977).

#### **8.2.1.5 Leadership and the managing of tensions**

In this study the ability of successful heads to manage a number of tensions has also emerged. The tensions identified in this study tended to be those over which head teachers had little choice or influence (Day et al., 2000). Heads then fight to find the balance among the two. In summary, the main tensions of the Cypriot heads were: personal value system Vs bureaucratic system which confirms the existing research literature and will be discussed in this section; democratic leadership versus authoritarian approach, which adds to the existing research literature and will be discussed in the following section.

##### **8.2.1.5.1 Personal value system Vs bureaucratic system (rules and regulations)**

The heads of this study also faced tensions in combining the values that they possess such as integrity, kindness, fairness, justice, respect and mutual trust with the massive Ministry's rules and regulations that they have to implement. For example, Head 1 reported regularly saying to her teachers: 'I want to develop your talents, you have the

autonomy to be creative but always within the limits of Ministry regulations’.

Although she allowed teachers to have a kind of autonomy, at the same time she had in mind the Ministry’s regulations. This means that successful heads had the ability to managed tensions by finding the balance between the expectations of the bureaucratic system (see Chapter 3) and the expectation of their own value system. Although all the heads in the study respected the rules and regulations of the Ministry, they were close to the needs of their students and teachers; they acted as a ‘buffer’ every time they were threaten by the external environment; they showed understanding for their emotions and most importantly the school purposes were based on their own personal values (see section 5.2).

**8.2.2 Findings which add to existing knowledge**

**8.2.2.1 Leadership in Cyprus and in Western Countries**

The following table (Table 8.1: Leadership in Cyprus and in Western countries) shows the main similarities and differences in leadership between Cypriot heads and Western countries heads that have emerged from this study and the international studies.



**Successful Primary School Leadership in Cyprus and in Western Countries  
Similarities and Differences**

<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>Western Countries</b>
Contexts and differentiation of leadership practices (range, intensity, time) (see section 8.2.2.2)	Contexts and differentiation of leadership practices (range, intensity, time) – England- Day et al (2008, 2009)
The social context of schools: SES, school size (see section 8.2.2.2.1)	The social context schools: SES, school size – Australia, England – (Day and Leithwood, 2007; Harris, 2002)
National context: the influences of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus (see section 8.2.2.2.2)	No findings
Strong moral values, which are influenced by the Church's principles, direct heads leading their schools (see sections 8.2.1.1; 8.2.2.2.2)	Heads leadership practices are driven by their personal values system (Day and Leithwood, 2007)
National context: the influences of the small size of the country (see section 8.2.2.2.3)	No findings
Heads experience has a significant role in developing leadership practices (see section 8.2.2.2.4)	Heads experience has a significant role in developing leadership practices (Day, 2003; Sugrue, 2005b)
The effects of rotational policy upon leadership (see section 8.2.2.2.5)	Become successful in longer periods of time – Australia, Sweden, U.K., U.S.A., (Day et al., 2007) Learn to adapt quickly to new circumstances due to rotational policy -Ontario (Macmillan, 1998, 2000)
Leadership distribution: progression and limitations (see section 8.2.2.3)	Distributed leadership – Canada, Finland (Leithwood et al, 2007, OECD, 2008) Progressive distribution – England – (Day et al., 2009) Limited distribution – Spain, Austria (OECD report 2008)
Leadership and the management of tensions: democratic Vs authoritarian approach and short term Vs long term tenure (see section 8.2.2.4)	Management of tension: leadership Vs management, development Vs maintenance, autocracy Vs autonomy, Personal time Vs professional tasks – England – (Day et al., 2000)
Authority: limits democracy: teachers participate in decision making on issues that are related to them (see section 8.2.2.4.1)	Democratic leadership: teachers, parents, students and community has a say in decision making – e.g. Denmark, Finland, Norway; Sweden (Mahony and Moos, 1994; Johansson, 2004, Møller et al., 2005; OECD, 2008) Leading democratically: -Spain, Austria (OECD, 2008)
Management of the tension: personal value system Vs bureaucracy system (see section 8.2.1.5.1)	Management of the tension: personal value system Vs bureaucracy system
Develop moral and emotional leadership (see sections 8.2.1.2; 8.2.1.3)	Develop moral and emotional leadership (Day and Leithwood, 2007)
Strong humanitarian leadership (see sections 8.2.1.3; 8.2.2.2.2)	Person-centred leadership (Day et al., 2000)

**Table 8.1: Leadership in Cyprus and in Western countries**

#### **8.2.2.2 Contexts and differentiation of practices**

An important finding from this research is the interrelationship between the head teachers' practices, their experiences and the specific contexts of schools. This means that although all the heads in the study were successful, they achieved success in different ways (Day et al. 2008a; Day et al. 2009). Whilst there were common 'core' practices in leading their schools (Leithwood et al. 2007), at the same time, there were differences too. They used a range of strategies, practices, skills and qualities with different intensity and at different times. In this section, I will discuss the following aspects that were found to differentiate leadership in the context of Cyprus: the social context of schools (SES and school size), the national contexts (the Greek Orthodox Church and small country) and the head teachers' experiences (rotational policy).

##### **8.2.2.2.1 The social context of schools: SES of schools and school size**

The empirical evidence of the study (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7) demonstrated that the social context of the Cypriot schools (school SES, school size) influenced the way successful heads approached leadership. Firstly, the data showed that the head teachers' practices were influenced by the SES level of their schools (low, middle, high SES). They adopted a range of approaches related to the needs of their schools- teachers, students- with different intensity each time. For example, in low SES schools heads focused on inclusive practices and on making parents collaborate with the school, they personally solved students' problems and strongly supported their staff (see section 6.3.1) (Harris and Chapman 2002; Day et al., 2009). In the high SES schools heads emphasised school events and celebrations, acted regularly as a buffer

to the distractions of the external environment and developed transparency in decision making (see section 6.3.1).

In order to help their schools to survive in changing times successful heads went beyond the traditional ways of leading. They implemented different methods and only adopted those which worked in the particular context. For example, head nine at a high SES school, acknowledged that the school-students and parents that she worked with at that point, had different needs from the community that she had worked in her first years as a head. She tried to develop strategies and activities that she had used before but they had not had successful. She rejected them and developed ideas that served the needs of the context. In this sense, leadership cannot be understood by using only one leadership theory – see chapter three: leadership models. This evidence, therefore, leads to the conclusion that heads did not follow any leadership theory; they seemed to develop their ‘own practical theory’ based on needs, hopes, ideals and symbols of their school and the whole community (Leithwood and Reihl, 2003).

Secondly, school size has also appeared to influence the way heads approached leadership. It was reported that the heads who led small schools developed closer relationships with their staff, provided the conditions for excellent collaboration among staff and focused on each individual student’s difficulties (see section 6.3.2). In contrast, heads in medium and large size schools spent a lot of time on school organization and establishing clear communication channels with teachers. Thus, regarding the social context of schools, successful heads developed a variety of skills, qualities and practices, with different intensity, based on the needs of the contexts.

#### **8.2.2.2.2 National context: the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus**

The national context characteristic - the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus- seemed to be a factor that differentiated Cypriot heads practices from their colleagues in Western countries. From the findings of this study, there is little doubt that the culture of the Greek Orthodox Church influenced heads' leadership. On the one hand, the limited distribution of leadership in Cypriot schools (I will discuss the limited distributed leadership in the next section) mirrors the paternalistic form of leadership that is characteristic of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. Its traditions have been for centuries closely related to Cypriot schools, families and the government (35 years ago the president of the country was a priest), so they are part of the Cypriot culture. The hierarchical system that characterises the structure of the Church, with priests possessing the power within their churches, was transferred through the educational policies to head teachers. Heads are the central focus of schools (as are priests in church environment) and they control the distribution of their power. As I have reported earlier all successful heads (all of them were over 50's) spent their childhood and their youth close to the Church traditions (see Chapter 7). This was a determining factor in the way they perceived their role in the school and how they distributed their power. This historical context, therefore, generates a limitation on the extent to which Cypriot successful heads distribute more of their power.

On the other hand, the Church's principles led heads to adopt humanitarian and inclusive leadership approaches (see sections 5.2.2; 5.2.3; 5.3; 6.4). The close ties of heads' families and heads themselves, to the Church's ceremonies and traditions

seemed to nurture within them the core ethical/moral principals of Christianity. The deep moral values of heads that penetrated the purposes and direction of their schools, their strategies and decisions were based on the Church's influences (see section 8.2.1.1). Heads' qualities of serving, loving and caring about people in their schools, the celebration of the values of equality and justice and the personal values of integrity, consensus, kindness and honesty were the outcome of their deep religious faith (see section 5.2.3). People (students, teachers) reflected those values, beliefs and qualities of their heads in their respect, loyalty, trust and hard work (see section 5.2.1.2). In short, the Church's influence show how both the strength of history and national culture affect the procedures of schools and especially the skills, qualities and values of head teachers.

#### **8.2.2.2.3 National context: the influence of the small size of the country**

Further, the findings showed that the national context characteristics of people—teachers, students, parents—, who have been nurtured in a small country environment, seem to influence the headship leadership approaches in schools (Chapter 7). People in Cyprus learned to develop close relationships with each other in their day-to-day lives because they might know each other or they are connected in some way. The data in this study revealed that heads developed intense person-centred and emotional leadership approaches in order to satisfy people's needs and to relate school culture with the wider society (Chapters 5 and 7). All the successful heads in this study, for example, built relationships by communicating at a personal level, solving problems, caring, being sensitive to peoples needs, and listening to them (see section 5.3.3.1). Although previous studies have identified the influence of national culture on leadership practices (Dimmock and Walker, 2000a; Day and Leithwood 2007), the

findings of this study add to the knowledge of its influence. It is the first time in research literature on leadership that factors such as 'the Church' and 'the small country size' have emerged as important influences on the differentiation of head teachers' values, qualities and practices.

#### **8.2.2.2.4 Head teachers' experiences**

The findings of this study revealed the interrelation between heads' experience and the way they exercised leadership (see sections 6.2, 6.3). The heads set different priorities during their early years at a school in comparison with their later years (Day, 2007). Their early priorities were related to the functional needs of their school, the abilities, talents and experiences of their teachers, the academic level of their students and the needs of the community as a whole (see Chapter 7). For example, a newly appointed head had as a priority developing relationships with teachers and parents, while a head teacher with longer tenure at a school set learning-centred priorities for teachers and students. In this sense, the heads were able to set priorities, to make choices about the best strategy to follow and, finally to be adapted to new situations.

#### **8.2.2.2.5 The effects of the rotational policy upon leadership**

Although successful heads fulfilled their short term plans, as I have discussed above, they could not fulfil their long term plans due to the rotational policy or the policy of limiting head teachers' tenure at a school. This policy seemed to be a barrier for the development of heads' long term plans and for the sustainability of improvement in their schools (they were appointed at a rural school, for example, for only two years). Moving around schools, heads did not have the appropriate time to develop (see

section 6.5), for example, all the stages that are needed for progressive distributed leadership (Day et al., 2009). However, the heads in this study emerged to transform this obstacle (rotating around schools) into learning challenges, and they overcame them by being flexible and quickly adapted to new school circumstances (see sections 6.3; 6.5) (Macmillan, 1998, 2000).

### **8.2.2.3 Leadership distribution: progression and limitations**

The successful heads in this study shared some of their power by distributing responsibilities to their teachers and by giving them space to be creative within a hierarchical environment. Monitoring, supporting, serving and advice-giving, whenever they were needed, were their main strategies to establishing, a participative climate in schools. Here the leaders' focus was on increasing teachers' commitment and increasing the moral bonds between them and teachers.

The definition of 'democratic' leadership as used in the Cyprus context involves limited formal distribution of leadership practices, although with the bureaucratic system heads had developed to have developed informal means (not required by the MOEC) for distributing their power. The limited engagement of others in leadership roles was based on the expertise and abilities that each individual person possessed, and mainly on the development of trust in the particular context and time (see sections 5.3, 6.3) (Day et al., 2009). Some heads in this study distributed power to their deputy heads only, but in most cases they distributed power to teachers as well. The data showed that in five schools there were 'informal leaders' who were responsible for managing programmes, sharing information and developing their colleagues (see Chapters 5 and 6), while at the same time, they kept heads informed about their

actions. For example, in School 1 a teacher with a PhD in Maths Education acted as a model to the rest of the teachers: she taught Maths lessons using contemporary methods of teaching and her colleagues observed her lessons. She was also the Maths coordinator in the school and she informally advised the other teachers. Further, at School 8 a teacher with special abilities on educational technology acted as a model. He taught lessons with technology application and his colleagues observed him. He organized small seminars for his colleagues, and also for teachers from other neighbouring schools. The development of limited distribution of leadership by heads helped teachers to develop their talents, to be motivated and to increase their self-efficacy. In this sense, by distributing their power heads had time, as 'values carriers' (Greenfield, 1986), to promote shared vision.

Day and his colleagues in a recent study (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou and Kington, 2009) introduced the claim of progressive distribution of leadership in schools. Similarly, the heads in this study distributed their power progressively but as the findings confirmed they would never be able to achieve all of its potential because of their limited tenure at a school (due to the rotational policy of heads and the influence by the paternalistic form of leadership provided by the Greek Orthodox Church). The findings of this study extend the knowledge on how distributed leadership may be understood in specific national contexts. They (the findings) support the idea of a limited form of distributed leadership in strong bureaucratic hierarchical systems and afford new insights into what distributed leadership means in the real world of schools in Cyprus.



#### **8.2.2.4 Leadership and the managing of tensions**

As I have discussed in section 8.2.1.5, successful heads had the ability to manage a number of tensions. In this section I will present democratic versus authoritarian approach.

##### **8.2.2.4.1 Democratic Vs Authoritarian approach**

The heads in this study faced tensions in combining the authoritarian power of their position with their democratic values. On the one hand, they had the ultimate power to decide and control all the main activities in their schools and to put into practice the rules and regulations of the Ministry. On the other hand, their personal value systems led them to develop democratic processes in schools (see section 5.2). Consequently, they managed the tension to find the balance between authority and democracy. They took informed risks (made choices) in order to be democratic and they saw opportunities and possibilities where others may not (see section 6.4). Five of the heads in the study believed that the discussions among teachers to make a decision took longer as people needed time to express and discuss their ideas. Sometimes there were conflicts during the discussions amongst the staff, but the final results (the teachers' ownership and the hard work of teachers for their decisions) made them confident for the strategies they had adopted (see section 6.3). For example, Head 8 followed democratic processes in decision making so he let his teachers discuss (many times) and decide on important school issues. As he and his teachers reported, in some cases, there were tensions and disagreements among teachers. Some of them were disappointed with the discussions. However, he learned from his experience that: 'When teachers take part in decision making I believe they work harder in order to make the goal happen; they become associates and helpers' (Head, School 8). The

collaboration with the people around them, the promotion of team-based approaches the sharing of the responsibility of complexity, increase the chances to find better solutions and at the same time reinforce the feeling of value and respect for their ideas and their contribution to the school (see sections 5.3; 6.4).

These conclusions are based upon the data analysis in chapter five and six which reported that heads followed participatory approaches to decision making, distributed their power, created communication networks with everybody related to the school and developed mechanisms to make the period of adjustment in a new environment shorter (see sections 6.4; 6.5).

8.2.3: Findings: A conceptual map

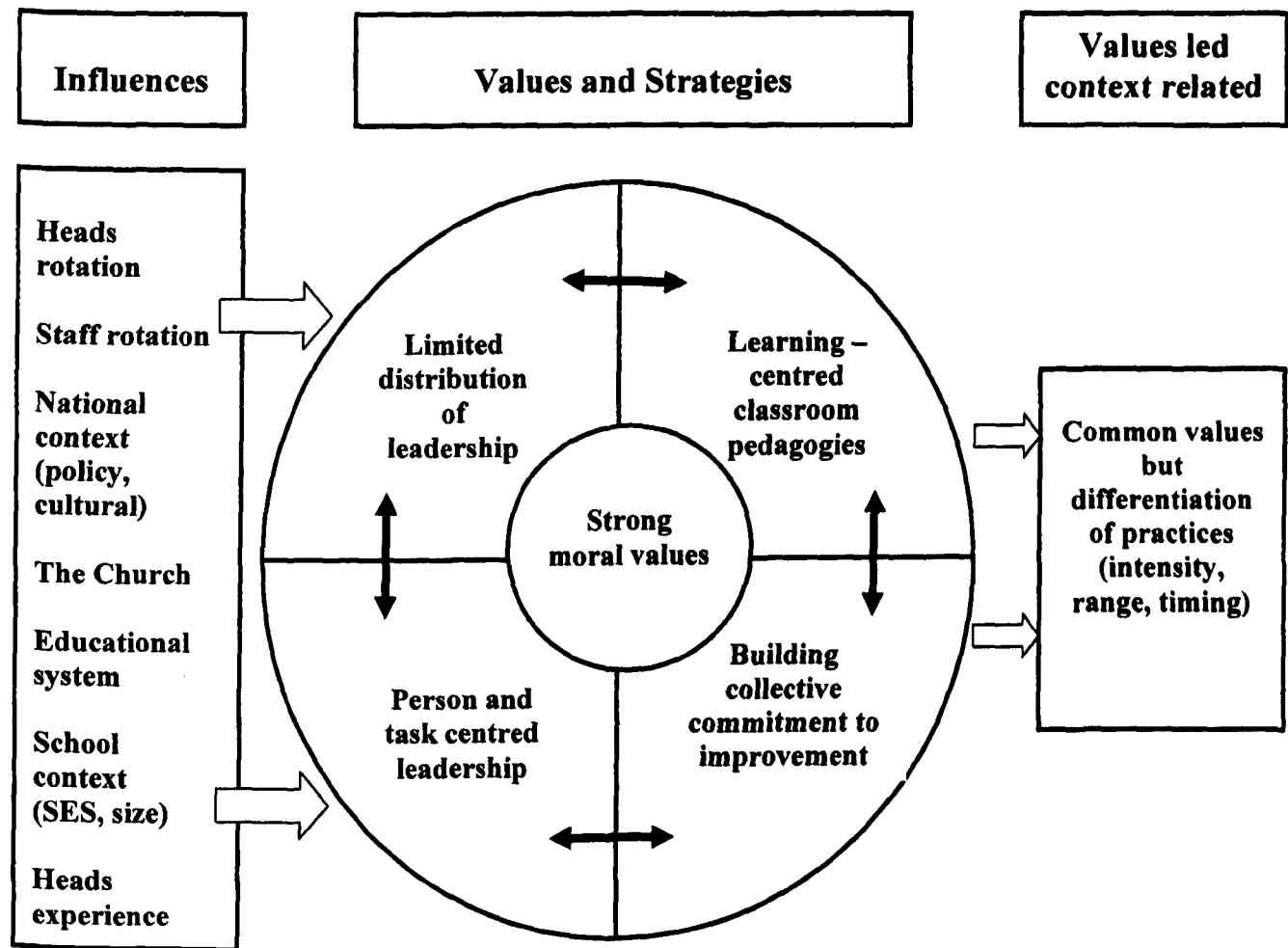


Figure 8.1: Differentiation in successful primary headship in Cyprus

Figure 8.1: Differentiation in successful primary headship in Cyprus based on the discussion above. This conceptualization of headship is based on three interrelated parts. Firstly, it illustrates the leadership values and strategies' influences which are the heads rotation, the staff rotation, the National context, the Church, the educational system, the school context and the heads experiences. Secondly, it demonstrates the strategies and values of successful heads in Cyprus. They possess strong moral values (see sections 8.2.1.1; 8.2.2.2.2) which are the central drivers of their practices. These values influence and direct their day-to-day actions and the strategies that they follow

in order to achieve school goals: the limited distribution of leadership (see section 8.2.2.3), the learning-centred classroom pedagogies (8.2.2.3), the building of collective commitment to improvement (see section 8.2.1.4), person and task centred leadership (see section 8.2.1.2; 8.2.1.3; 8.2.2.3). While these leadership strategies are informed constantly by their strong moral values, at the same time there is interrelation between them. The third part of the Figure 8.1 is the result of the 'interaction' between the leadership influences with values and strategies which lead to the differentiation of head teachers practices based on common values. This suggests that successful heads use a range of practices of different intensity at different times. This part is called 'values led context related'. Overall, the key finding is that successful leadership does not follow any single model but rather differentiates its approaches according to the context and peoples needs.

### **8.3 Religious' values<sup>1</sup> based leadership model**

Within the wider discussions about change in schools of Cyprus the role of heads continues to be conceived as rational and bureaucratic. In the same vein, the formal development of heads emphasises the development of organizational skills and information about rules and regulations. The findings of this study provide somewhat different perspectives, highlighting the key role in successful leadership which values, particularly religious values, and emotional intelligence and understandings, play. This "religious' value"-based model is aligned to the cultural history of society in Cyprus. Specific it is an aspect of what Hodginson (1991) and others have identified as 'moral leadership'. This assumes that if we are interested to have successful heads at schools, then they should have a clear set of values about mutual trust and justice in

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<sup>1</sup> Moral values may derive from society and government, religion or self. Religion is another source of moral values.

schools; they should love and care about people –teachers, students, parents-; they show high levels of integrity; and can lead schools to success through individual and collective commitment to school goals. Heads using those values can justify their choices on moral, or in the case of Cyprus, religious principles. Successful headship in Cyprus, then, is grounded on the heads’ model of religious,’ values based leadership. In terms of training and development, then, building heads’ capacity to make sense of what they value (within their context) and how to reflect on those values on regular basis would seem to be a key measure in creating opportunities for success.. In this sense, heads would have the abilities for developing self within the school context.

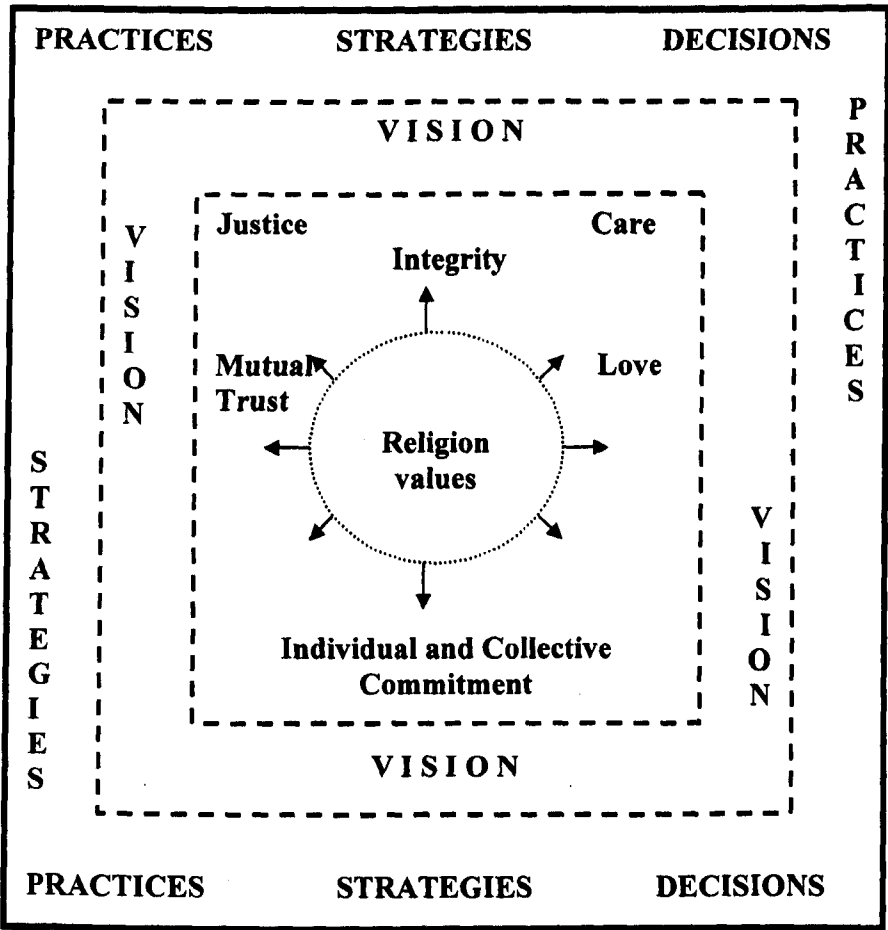


Figure 8---: Religious’ Values Leadership Model

Following the religious' values based leadership heads can transform their strong religious background into practice through the communication and modelling of their vision. They can make it a personal process, a discourse with their internal moral values and beliefs. In this sense, values perspective links theory and practice with the specific objectives and needs of each school. According to Begley (2001) 'all leaders consciously or unconsciously employ values as guides in interpreting situations and suggesting appropriate administrative action. This is the artistry of leadership' (Begley, 2001: 364). Such artistry is relying on the capacity of heads, as religious 'value carriers' (Greenfield, 1986) in Cyprus, to find the links between theory and practice and the balance between their own moral values and those imposed by the specific school context. However, this process is not a straight forward path; it is complex and full of hazards. Heads deep core values can act as a cocoon and show them the way in decision making, in strategic design and in implementation of policies.

Heads that follow the religious' values based leadership are concerned about the nature of the relationships among those within their school. Their emphasis is on persons –teachers, students and parents- even if the rules and regulations promote power relations. They establish communication, care and understanding of teachers and students problems in order to get better learning. They also have the ability to create relationships based on respect and trust among teachers, students and parents which increase the levels of commitment and loyalty to school goals. These qualities open doors to the distribution of power to teachers. This model which illustrates a richer understanding of the significant role played by values in successful leadership,

not only provides a contribution to knowledge about leadership in Cypriot primary schools but, in doing so, challenges the existing training and development programmes which dominate the Cyprus educational system. In successful headship, it seems that power is distributed. Teachers are encouraged to become leaders in their schools and heads and schools promote opportunities for participation – e.g. decision making, programme design- in greater number of interested groups.

#### **8.4 Conceptualizing my role as a researcher**

In this section I examine my dual role as a researcher and as a teacher. Particularly, I discuss how my teacher experience (as insider) was in harmony with my role as a researcher (as outsider). On the one hand, I had the teacher perspective, and on the other hand, I developed the researcher perspective. In order to cope with those roles some questions were raised: Are there any conflicts/influences between the two roles (insider/outsider)? To what degree should I keep my neutrality? Which are the boundaries of each role? What is the contribution of two roles (as teacher and researcher) to this research?

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this study I have been a teacher for 15 years. As a teacher I was familiar with the schools' processes and procedures, the rules and regulations and I knew the most common problems that school faced because of the uniformity of the educational system. Although as a teacher (insider) I believed that I was aware of the head teachers' role at a great degree, during the fieldwork I realized that my understanding was connected with my perspective within the context in which I was working with and the day-to-day superficial observation. As a non participant observer and as an interviewer (outsider) I found out the dynamism of a multi-

dimensional reality which otherwise I would not be able to understand. My perspective as a researcher allowed me to get deeper into the data and understand the parts which built up the complexity role of headship leadership (Lincoln and Guba, 1994). Particularly, as a researcher I have made sense of successful headship influences and how those influences had an effect on heads values and strategies. For example, the findings identified that the culture of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus significantly affected the personal and moral values of heads and acted as a boundary for the leadership distribution (see section 8.2.2.2.2). Before the research I was not able to understand and explain those heads practices and values. I assumed that the main responsibility of the lack of leadership distribution in schools was mainly related to the MOEC and the hierarchical system. In this respect the process of the research helped me as a researcher to see the invisible side of leadership in the Cyprus context.

Simultaneously, my continued reflection about my experience served in deepens and clarified my understanding about my role. In this sense the insider role was complementary of that of the outsider role (Le Gallais, 2003; Robson, 2002). Both roles were supporting in unfold the different dimensions of headship leadership.

My insider role – as a teacher- was also an important element in reaching the participants – heads, teachers, students, parents. As discussed in Chapter 4, in the first stages of the research the participants saw me as a colleague and as a teacher (Baumann, 1991), a fact that emerged to be an advantage for the data collection. The participants’ –teachers- acceptance of my role reinforced by the fact that they use statements such as: ‘Yes, I will help you because you are a colleague’; ‘Oh! You are a



colleague ... at which school? ... of course I will help you'. In addition to that, parents showing their respect to my role as a teacher by inviting me at their homes to have the interview. Being a colleague/teacher –insider researcher-, I gained their trust and they provided rich and authentic information about their role in schools (Hammersly, 1992). This had a positive impact on the trustworthiness of the research as the quality of the data improved (Robson, 2002).

During the next stages of the research and through the interview process and the discussions that we had, they saw me as a person outside their school, who had the theoretical background to search the unobservable sides of their roles. Although heads asked me to make them suggestions or to answer their questions in order to find better solutions to their problems, I constantly tried to refuse such involvement by trying to develop a 'neutral attitude'. I either told them that: 'I prefer not to answer your question because my involvement in the research' or I returned the question back to them: 'What do you think?' or 'Which solution is for the students benefit' or 'Have you ever had cope with this problem?' Of course, the focus on neutrality might lead to losing important data as the discussion is discontinued and it does not support people to talk more about their experience. Such a stance is hard to maintain when researchers seek to have rich information and deepen their understanding (Le Gallais, 2001). I tried hard to find a balance between the two. The line, though between the researcher's neutrality and involvement is not clear. There can be no absolutes with regard to insider and outsider research there is only a question of degree which is depended on the experience and personality of the researcher to find the golden mean between the two. I had a distance from the data because I did not stay in schools for such a long time to become a member of them.

## **8.5 Reflection on Limitations**

I am aware that the research relied on a single researcher. I was the observer, the interviewer and the one who analysed and interpreted the data. I do not believe this invalidates the findings. Having more than one person analyse and interpret the data, would, however, have made the study more trustworthy. This could be achieved by having a colleague who was aware of the successful headship research and literature, analyse and interpret the data at the same time in order to triangulate the results.

Secondly, the way I have selected the sample of successful heads might be a limitation for the study as it was not based on league-tables or on a formal governmental evaluation. However, the educational context of Cyprus does not provide a way of differentiating head teachers. In order to overcome this problem, I asked inspectors to define the 'success' of head teachers and in this context to suggest 2-3 primary head teachers that they considered to be successful. After the fieldwork was finished, I confirmed that all the head teachers were successful.

Thirdly, I am aware that being an observer in schools might create a considerable effect on the behaviour of head teachers, teachers, students and other people in the school. Participants may have behaved in some atypical fashion when they knew they were being observed, and the selective perception of the observer might distort the data and hence the outcomes of the study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). In addition to that, observations are also limited in focusing only on external behaviours-the observer cannot see what is happening inside people (Patton, 2002). Finally, there is

also the possibility that certain of my characteristics, prejudices or ideas may bias what I 'saw'. To overcome those limitations I decided to (a) use triangulation of methods to contrast the observational data with the interviews and documents and (b) return the transcripts of the interviews to the heads allowing them to check them for accuracy, and to add comments and/or supplementary information.

Fourthly, I am aware that interview data will include responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviewers can greatly affect the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview. Interview data is also subject to recall error, reactivity of the interviewee to the interviewer and self-serving responses (Patton, 2002). The multiple perspective approach that was used in this research was helpful in overcoming these limitations. The questions asked at the interviews were designed to cover common themes for all the participants, therefore, providing the opportunity to triangulate their answers.

Fifth, I analysed the data from this study by using the traditional methods and not the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. I do not believe that the manual analysis of the data affected the results of this study. Although the computer analysis of data may help a researcher in the organization of the data, it cannot help with decisions about the coding of textual materials or about the interpretations of findings (Bryman, 2001).

## **8.6 Further Research**

This study highlights some important avenues for further research. First, additional multi-perspective studies are needed at all levels of education - kindergarten, middle high, high school- as well as at other areas of the country –rural areas- in order to explore more deeply the skills, qualities, values, practices and knowledge of successful heads in specific school contexts of the same national context. These kinds of research will help to understand the differences and similarities between headship contexts in the same country. Within the same country it would also be useful to look at schools which are deemed as less successful. This might allow the identification of key qualities of successful leadership, the strategies and skills.

In addition, it would be interesting to study successful heads with the same years of experience. Such a study, combining these two strands of inquiry, would ideally combine a longitudinal, qualitative approach with a quantitative analysis. The qualitative approach would be helpful to view in depth and in a limited number of heads their needs, expectations skills, qualities and strategies. At the same time, it would provide evidence on how they change priorities in accordance with the environmental changes. The quantitative approach would be useful in identifying if the whole group of heads with the same years of experience on the island, would present the same evidence.

It would also be interesting to conduct follow-up studies with the successful heads of this study after they change schools, in order to examine in which ways they continue to be successful and to compare their practices in different contexts. In addition to that, a study with their teachers, to examine how the practices and their values might

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have been changed by successful heads leadership. It would also be interesting to explore how those teachers respond to a new head teacher in their schools. Another area for research that this study emphasizes, is the investigation of how and in which ways successful heads influence students' outcomes.

The last issue for further investigation is related to the policy of rotation of head teachers around schools. Additional exploration and a holistic approach is needed to investigate the consequences of rotation policy in schools.

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**LIST OF APPENDICES**

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

#### **Head teachers Interview Schedule**

##### **Personal Biography**

Years of experience as a teacher, previous experience, experience at the present school.

1. Could you tell me about your personal background? What influences or significant experiences of your life did shape your views on life, your values, your aspirations, ambitions and your actions?
2. Describe the main stages of your career to date. Why did you decide to become a head teacher?
3. What and who influenced your view and practice of leadership? What are your key values, beliefs and educational philosophy? (Greenfield, 1986; Day et al. 2003a) Has that changed over time? Has headship become less difficult as you have become more experienced? How do you enjoy headship? (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996)
4. How did you prepare yourself for headship? How do you maintain your own professional development? Where do you find support? What would you like to have learnt?
5. What was your early experience of headship like? Have you changed? Why? How would you describe your career as a head?

##### **Heads rotation**

6. How do heads and teacher rotation influence school climate or processes? How is your leadership practice affected? (Macmillan, 2000)

##### **Prescription of school**

7. Describe the school in which you are a head (teachers, students, parents, community) (Reeves et al., 1998a; Day et al., 2000).

What are the strengths and challenges of this school?

Has the school changed since you have been appointed as a head? Please give examples.

Would you like to stay at this school? Why (not)?

## **Prescription of leadership**

8. Describe how you cope with those challenges. Why did you decide to go to that direction? How have you planned change? What were your alternative strategies? (Day et al., 2003b )
9. What is your vision about the school? How do you build vision among students, parents, staff and community? What are the effects of your vision and values for the school? ( Stoll and Fink, 1997; Dempster and Mahony, 1998; Gold et al., 2003)
10. How would you describe your leadership as a head? Based on your criteria, which are those strategies, qualities and skills that make you successful at your work? (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Day et al., 2000)

Literature says that successful leaders increase teachers' commitment. How do you think you have influenced teachers to be committed to school goals and vision? Which mechanism do you use to build trust among staff for creating standards of excellence? How do you develop a supportive atmosphere in school for (a) each individual (b) the team (students, teachers, parents) (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Noddings, 2002)

11. How is successful learning and teaching achieved in your school? What is your contribution to that? Describe the learning environment of your school. Which methods do you use to build it? How do you assess teachers and students and how do you give them feedback? What is your relationship with students? What mechanism do you use to maintain your teachers' professional development? (Blase and Anderson, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Southworth, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003)
12. Which strategies do you follow in decision making? How do you manage staff meetings? What is the role of teachers in school leadership? (How do you distribute leadership to staff and parents?) (Spillane et al., 2001; Harris and Chapman, 2002)
13. How do you manage/build external relationships? What strategies do you use to strengthen communication and collaboration? How do parents involve in school activities? (Nias et al., 1989; Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Fullan, 2001, Ginsberg and Davies, 2003)
14. What does successful leadership means to you? How do you achieve successful leadership in school? (Examples).

If you were asked to describe the factors that provide evidence of success in your school, what would they be?

## **Teacher/Deputy head Interview Schedule**

### **Teacher Biography**

Years of experience, years of experience at the present school.

### **Perceptions of the school**

1. Describe the school in which you are a teacher? How would you describe the challenges of this school? (Examples) How would you describe the strengths of this school? (Reeves et al., 1998a; Day et al., 2000)

Has the school changed after the appointment of the current head?

Describe the parents' involvement in this school (Examples). Describe the student population of the school.

2. What are your feelings about this school? Describe how you, the head teacher, students, parents and the rest of the staff feel happy in this school (Zembylas and Isenbarger, 2002; Hargreaves, 2003).

### **Heads rotation**

3. How do heads and teacher rotation influence school climate and processes? How does leadership practice affected (Macmillan, 2000)

### **Prescription of the leadership**

4. What was your experience with the head teacher like? How confident did he/she feel at the beginning and how now? Examples. (Macmillan, 1998)
5. Describe the way that the head teacher approaches the leadership and management of this school. How does he/she enjoy headship? Describe some incidents showing this enjoyment (Day et al., 2000).
6. Based on your criteria, which are those qualities, and skills that make your head successful at his/her work? (Tell me three characteristics that describe him/her as a personality and as professional) (Day et al. 2000; Harris, 2002)
7. What is his/her vision about the school? How does he/she communicate his/her vision among students, parents and staff? What are the effects of his/her vision and values for the school and personally for you? (Nias et al., 1989; Leithwood et al., 1992; Riley and MacBeath, 1998)

Literature says that successful leaders increase teachers' commitment. How do you think you have been influenced by the head teacher to be committed to school goals and vision? Which mechanism does he/she use to trust him/her in order to create standards of excellence? How does he/she develop a supportive atmosphere in school for (a) each individual, (b) the team (students, parents,



staff). (Nias et al., 1989; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Noddings, 2002)

8. In which way does the head teacher promote learning and teaching? How is successful learning and teaching achieved in this school? What is the head teacher contribution to that? Describe the learning environment of your school. Which methods does he/she use to build it? How does he/she assess you (teachers) and students and how does he/she give you feedback? What is his relationship with students? (Blase and Anderson, 1985; Hargreaves, 2003)
9. What mechanism does he/she use to maintain your professional development? (Examples) (Blase and Blase, 1998; Gurr, 2003)
10. Which strategies does she/he follow in decision making? How does he/she manage staff meetings? What is your (teachers) role in school leadership (How does he/she distribute leadership to you and the parents)? (Spillane et al., 2001 ; Harris and Chapman, 2002)
11. How does he/she manage external relationships? What strategies does he/she use to strengthen communication and collaboration? How are parents involved in school activities? (Rosenholtz, 1989; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986)
12. What does successful leadership means to you? How does successful leadership achieved in your school? Examples.

## **Parents Interview Schedule**

### **Prescriptions of the school**

1. Describe the school that your child attending. Which are the strengths and challenges of this school? What is his/her vision about the school? What was the school like when he/she took it over? What is the difference now? What are the effects of his/her vision on the school and on you as parent (s)? (Reeves et al., 1998; Day et al., 2000)
2. Describe your child's impression about the school. What do you discuss about the school at home? Are you happy that your child coming in this school? Tell me three things that you like and three things that you do not like in this school. What changes do you thing that your school is needed? (Day et al., 2003)
3. What are your feelings about this school? Describe how the head teacher, teachers, students and other parents do feel happy in this school (Zembylas and Isenbarger, 2002; Hargreaves, 2003).

### **Heads rotation**

4. How do heads and teacher rotation influence school climate or processes? How is your leadership practice affected (Macmillan, 2000)

### **Prescriptions of the leadership**

5. What was your experience with the successful head teacher like? How confident did he/she feel at the beginning of his/her appointment at the school and how now? (Macmillan, 1998)
6. In which ways the head teacher promote learning? How does she/he improve the learning environment of the school based on your experience with your child? How does he/she assess their improvement? How does she/he give you feedback about your students? What is his/her relationship with students? (Blase and Anderson, 1986; Hargreaves, 2003)
7. Describe what kind of meetings has taken place focusing on parents' development. (McLaughlin and Tablert, 1993)
8. What is the parents' role in the school? Describe the way/the techniques the head teacher use to distribute the leadership to you (parents). How does he manage parents meetings? How have parents involved in school activities? (Hallinger and Murphy, 1983; Harris, 2002)
9. What strategies does he/she use to strengthen communication with you (parents)? Describe in which ways the parents influence the head teacher. (Nias et al., 1989; Hallinger and Heck, 1996)

10. What is your reaction/thoughts to head teacher changing? How this affects school success? (Macmillan, 2000)
11. If you have a chance to have school choice will you move your child? Yes/no- For which reasons?
12. What does successful leadership means to you? What does make your head successful? How does he/she achieve successful leadership in your school?

## **Students Interview Schedule**

### **Prescriptions of the school**

1. Please describe me your school. Do you have fun coming to school? What do you like more? What do you like about your school? Give me some examples of having fun at school (in the classroom and in the yard) (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2002).
2. Tell me three things that you do like in this school and three things that you do not like in this school. What would you like to change at your school and why? Describe the time in the timetable that you like best. Why? (Day et al. 2000)
3. How do you understand that one day you are a good student and the next day not so good? When are you happy with your achievement? What does the teacher should say in order to be happy? Do you think that you learn a lot of things in this school? Why? (Moos et al., 1998; MacBeath and Mortimore, 2002).

### **Prescriptions of the leadership**

4. What is the name of the head teacher? What other information do you know about him/her? How do you feel when he/she: (a) comes in your classroom? (b) meet her/him in the corridor or in the yard? (c) speaks to you during students meetings? (Moos et al., 1998; Day et al., 2000).
5. What is a head teacher job? (Moos et al., 1998; Day et al., 2000)
6. I'm sure that your school is very successful and you are lucky having a great head teacher. What is about the head teacher that makes the school good? Which are the strategies that she/he uses to make this school good? (Hargreaves, 2003)
7. Does the head teacher teach you any lessons? Which lesson? How do you feel? What makes his/her lesson interesting?
8. What kind of celebrations or sport events do you have in this school? How do you feel during those celebrations? (Zembylas and Isenbarger, 2002)
9. A child wants to come to your school as a student. What will you tell him/her in order to be persuaded?

## APPENDIX B

### Letters of informed consent (Translated versions)

#### Topic: Letter to get parents consent

Dear parents,

I ask for your permission in order to interview your child that attends at the primary school of ..... The interview will be part of the research that I carry out in ten schools at Nicosia district with the title: 'The successful headship leadership in Cyprus primary schools'. The aim of this research is to study successful heads from multiple perspectives: deputy heads, teachers, parents and students. During the interview I will ask your child –through questions- to describe his/her head and the school processes. Your child has the right to conclude the interview at any time or to refuse answering any of my questions. All the answers will be confidential.

Thank you in advance

Yours sincerely

Kakia Angelidou  
PhD Candidate  
University of Nottingham

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I accept my son/daughter ..... to be interviewed in the line of research with the title: 'The successful headship leadership in Cyprus primary schools'.

Parent Signature

.....

**Topic: Letter of Intent**

Dear Mr/Ms .....,

The purpose of my research is to study the successful headteachers of primary schools of Cyprus by using a multiple perspectives approach (headteachers, deputy heads, teachers, parents and students). The interview will consist of the following themes: (a) Personal biography, (b) Prescription of school, (c) Prescription of leadership (d) Heads rotation. During the interview you have the right to refuse answer any question that you might not feel comfortable with or to conclude the interview. If you have any queries why I ask any of the questions, please not hesitate to ask. The answers that you will give during the interviews will be part of my PhD. I assure you that only the researcher will have access to the interview data and the personal information concerning research participants will be kept confidential.

Yours sincerely

Kakia Angelidou  
PhD Candidate  
University of Nottingham

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Letter asking for permission to carry out my research (Translated version)**

Dear Sir/Madame

I kindly ask for your permission to carry out a research study with the title: 'The successful primary headship in Cyprus'. The aim of this research, that will take place during the academic year 2005-2006, is to study the day-to-day practices of successful head teachers in the primary schools of Cyprus. I will use qualitative research methods: interviews (with heads, teachers, students and parents) and observations at 10 schools in Nicosia.

I assure you that the development of the study will not disturb the schools operation. Specific attention will be paid to the students interviews. The participation of students will be voluntary; they will have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time or not to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with. Attached is the main structure of the students' questions.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Kakia Angelidou  
PhD Candidate  
University of Nottingham